How can Confucian Philosophies Contribute to Gender Equality in Chinese Organisations?

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Abstract

At present, gender inequality still exists in some Asian countries, especially China. Existing gender inequality and lack of solutions to gender inequality continue to exist in Chinese organisations, affecting the career development of women. One of the most recognised and controversial contemporary Eastern philosophies concerning gender equality is Confucianism. Previous research has accused Confucian philosophies of teaching women's subordination to men (Li, 2000; Truong, 2013). However, the Confucian role has also been seen as a positive influence on the role of women through its reciprocal and respectful elements. In an organisational context, Confucian moral principles have been attributed with helping managers and employees regulate their own behaviours, such as self-regulation, justice and wisdom, in order to maintain management ethics. This study will attempt to identify how insights from Confucian philosophies can improve gender equality in Chinese organisations.

A qualitative, interpretive approach was applied for this research. Participants were selected based on their expert knowledge and experiences with Confucian philosophies. Through online semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of transcripts, this study highlights the potential contributions of Confucian philosophy to improve gender equality in Chinese organisations.

The findings of this research highlight that Confucian experts believe the original intention of Confucianism was not to discriminate against women, and the participants had various thoughts on how Confucius principles could influence management practice and gender equality. Specifically, promoting benevolence and love, non-discrimination in education, and harmony, can have an impact on valuing women in Chinese organisations. Confucian principles advocate positive social norms for behaviour in wider society and the workplace specifically. This research suggests that combining applying Confucian principles to management practice can enable a principled approach to management and leadership that can support greater gender equality, improving pathways and experiences for women in Chinese organisations.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Glossary

Table 1: Glossary of terms used in this dissertation:

Mandarin Pin Yin	English Definition
Junzi	Sages, person who regards to achieve a status of "noble" or "exemplary person" through virtues of self-cultivation.
Li	Propriety; rites or normative behaviour; used to regulate the relationship between individuals and others, achieving harmony among human beings.
Ren	Benevolence and love; moral goodness; the basis of ethical behaviour.
Wulun	Five Relationships, emperors and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, elder and young brothers, and friend-friend relationships.
Wuchang	Five virtues of Confucianism (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness).
Xin	Trustworthiness or good faith; Xin must conform to the principles of morality, honesty and not cheating.
Yang	Heaven; ruler; husband; the "male principle" of masculinity in nature, sometimes opposed to "Yin" in Chinese philosophy or medicine.
Yi	Righteousness; a reasonable standard for one's action under the guidance of moral judgments.
Yin	Earth; subordinates; wife; soft power, passive energy, and female aspects.
Zheng	Governance; means politics and governance of the country and organisation, and adhering to principles, acting with authenticity, and being fair and equality.
Zhi	Wisdom or knowledge; the meaning of "wisdom" is mainly reflected in making clear cognition and judgment of right and wrong.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the research background, outline the purpose, scope and importance of the study and identify the research question. The chapter concludes with the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Research Background

At present, gender inequality still exists in some Asian countries, especially China. This gender inequality and a lack of solutions to gender inequality continue to exist in Chinese organisations, affecting the career development of women. It is an important factor influencing women and their experiences in many Chinese organisations (Fei, 2017; Tatli et al., 2017), and is reflected in education, insufficient senior positions, female employment, and family-work conflicts (Fei, 2017). In particular, there is considerable evidence that women do not receive equal treatment to men (Fei, 2017; Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). Concerned about redressing gender inequality in China, women face the following major issues. In China, women's jobs and salaries are not the same as those of men (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). Women also experience the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling" in organisation. They face family-work conflict, and there is a lack of effective laws and regulations to fully protect women's rights (Tatli et al., 2017). This is prevalent in both rural and urban areas in China where women face gender inequality and discrimination (Tatli et al., 2017). In addition, that the influence of Confucianism regarding the role of women allows gender inequality to continue (Tatli et al., 2017).

Western research identifies a range of causes of continued gender inequality in organisations (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). In China, gender discrimination is one of the social factors leading to gender inequality in Chinese organisations (Fei, 2017). Although women's participation in education and work has improved, it has been observed that women in Chinese organisations are continually restricted by cultural beliefs and gendered social norms (Fei, 2017). Tatli et al. (2017) also argued that the glass ceiling, organisational culture, and gender stereotypes might lead to women's lack of career advancement in Chinese organisations. The male-dominated

prejudices (Tatli et al., 2017) and traditional beliefs (Fei, 2017) generally held by women have prompted women to maintain their subordinate status (Gao, 2003) and to be silent on inequality in organisations (Tatli et al., 2017). These societal views have not been resolved.

Confucian philosophies were derived and developed from the Chinese teaching on the meaning of life by Confucius (Ng, 2000; Yao, 2000). This has influenced historical, economic, political, and social aspects in China (Yao, 2000). Confucian philosophies were used to establish social orders and to guide the moral rules, and Confucius sought to develop foundational values such as compassion and tradition back into society (Zhao, 2018). Values such as ethical virtues and education were seen as an essential part of providing and restoring harmony in the wider society (Lin & Baker, 2019). As one example of Eastern wisdom, Confucian values later spread to Korea, Japan, and other countries around China (Zhao, 2018). However, feminist scholars claim that the gender inequality suffered by women in China and other East Asian societies is mainly derived from Confucian philosophies and is the key difference with western societies (Gao, 2003; Li, 2000). Such scholars have stressed that Confucianism is an enemy of gender equality and that its principles sponsor patriarchal society (Nuyen, 2001).

Conversely, basing the philosophy within the Chinese framework, Confucian and the *Analects* were developed with the objective of harmonising numerous values and morals that formed a harmonious society (Gao, 2017). In the management context, the Confucian ethical framework is closely attributed with aiding managers to control their own behaviours through wisdom, justice, fairness, and self-regulation, so as to uphold management ethics in Chinese organisations (Jiang et al., 2019). For instance, when managers engage in self-regulation they are able to behave more fairly and address issues which may help women in organisations in terms of moral behaviours which could draw on an ethical approach to gender norms (Tan, 2019). For these reasons above, this research debates the link between Confucianism and gender inequality in the literature review, and identifies the possibilities of how insights from Confucian philosophies can improve gender equality in Chinese organisations.

1.2 Significance of Study

Extant research suggests that a variety of individual and group factors may act to promote gender equality in Chinese organisations (Tatli et al., 2017). There is well-developed literature on the lack of gender equality in organisational contexts (Fei, 2017). This research will highlight the negative significance of continued gender inequality in China and will call for better equality in China. For instance, despite the constant improvement of women's social status, gender inequality for women in Chinese organisations is still evident (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). The glass ceiling and gender discrimination play a negative role in women's career development. In the case of senior positions, women are still much lower than that of their male colleagues; women are offered fewer opportunities for training than men; lack of support in family-work conflict results in women being faced with difficulties holding high level management positions (Fei, 2017; Tatli et al., 2017). Also, there has been a raging debate concerning Confucianism's affinity to the patriarchal society that endangers gender equality (Li, 2000). Feminist scholars state Confucianism is the key factor leading to social norms of gender inequality in Chinese organisations (Li, 2000; Rosenlee, 2006). However, Confucianism preaches on moral ethics and a "top-down" approach of ethics (Woods & Lamond, 2011). Confucian principles (Chen & Chung, 1994; Jiang et al., 2019) should result in improved gender equality in Chinese organisations. Thus, this research will help scholars and practitioners gain a deeper understanding of how Confucian principles can be drawn on to rectify gender inequalities specifically in Chinese organisations. The possibilities and potential of Confucianism will be explored.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research explores the potential contributions that Confucian philosophies can make to enhancing gender equality. The main purpose of interviews was to seek expertise on Confucian philosophies, including the experiences, application and interpretations of experts in Confucianism in relation to management and gender equality given that this is a qualitative interpretative study. The overall objective is to answer the following research question: How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in Chinese organisations?

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

This chapter provides an overview of the research background for this study which began with the phenomenon of gender inequality in Chinese organisations. In China, the role of women in practice is not valued (Fei, 2017). The causes of gender inequality, its prevalence in Chinese organisations, and the cultural beliefs such as Confucianism which play an essential role both in family and organisations, are addressed in this research. The intention is to explain the purpose, scope and importance of this research and identify the research objectives of this study.

Chapter Two gives a detailed review of the literature relating to the concept of gender equality, the range of causes of gender inequality, and the consequences for women in Chinese organisations. Arguments relating to the role of Confucianism in gender inequality will also be discussed.

Chapter Three outlines key components of Confucian philosophies drawn upon in the design and analysis of this research. An explanation of Confucian principles, ethical virtues, and harmony is provided.

Chapter Four provides a description of the methodology used in the present study. It gives an overview of the research design of this study, which adopted a qualitative, interpretive research approach. An explanation of the specific context in which the research was conducted, and a description of the procedures used in data collection and analysis are also presented.

Chapter Five presents the findings from thematic analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with five Confucian experts employed in China. Three overarching themes were identified, namely: Confucian ethics in management, causes of gender inequality, and Confucianism and gender equality. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the findings.

Chapter Six explores the themes outlined in Chapter Five in the context of the literature review. The chapter discusses the influences of Confucianism and gender equality in Chinese organisations according to the key components of Confucian philosophies identified in Chapter Three, and describes how these Confucian philosophies have shaped gender equality and addressed the issues in Chinese organisations. The implications of these findings will also be discussed.

Lastly, Chapter Seven presents the conclusions of this study and offers suggestions for further research. The chapter concludes with a summary and the recommendations for a principled approach to management in Chinese organisations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to the gender equality in the Chinese context, as well as issues related to gender inequality in Chinese organisations. Feminist scholars suggest that Confucian philosophies teach women's subordination to men (Li, 2000; Truong, 2013). However, Confucianism has also been seen to have a potentially positive influence on the role of women through its reciprocal and respectful elements. Different views in arguments for and against Confucianism and gender inequality in management will also be discussed in this chapter. This study will attempt to explore how insights from Confucian philosophies can improve gender equality in Chinese organisations.

2.2 The Concept of Gender Equality

To achieve gender equality, the definition and practices of gender equality must be clarified (Rolleri, 2013; Zainol et al., 2019). First, by understanding that "gender" and "sex" are not the same (Rolleri, 2013). "Sex" is the classification of female and male based on the biological perspective, while "gender" refers to whether a person identifies as naturally male or female according to their feelings at work or in their personal life (Rolleri, 2013). Moreover, gender equality does not mean that men and women are totally the same, but that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men are no longer to be determined by whether they were born male or female (Rolleri, 2013). Many aspects influence gender equality between women and men, including social environment, family relations, education, work, business, economy, and government (Rolleri, 2013). Zainol et al. (2019) quote Rolleri (2012a) to illustrate a definition for gender equality:

> *Gender equality refers to the social situation in which men and women have equal rights and balance their power, status, opportunities and rewards. Gender equality can be broadly implemented through equal access to and use of resources, equal participation in relationships, families, communities and political arenas, security or freedom from violence (p.50).*

From the definition, gender equality exists where people of all genders have rights, opportunities, and responsibilities that are shared equally (Zainol et al., 2019). Gender equality is very essential for economic prosperity, it makes the societies that practice it live healthier and safer lives (Zainol et al., 2019). Gender inequality is when women are not treated as equally and fairly as men, which is reflected in education, work, and many other fields (Chen, 2018). Gender inequality is regarded by Acker (1990) as discrepancies between men and women in work distribution, status, and power. For example, various tasks, responsibilities, and roles in organisations are still associated with stereotypically male-centered abilities and skills, and it is generally believed that women cannot hold higher positions traditionally held by men (Tatli et al., 2017). These discrepancies were adopted by some institutions, the ratio of male to female employees was alarming resulting in all top management positions being held by males (Acker, 2006). Gender inequality between men and women indicates that women's interests are not respected, resulting in poor performance (Chen, 2018). Gender inequality is tailored to local conditions due to the influence of social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Fei, 2017; Leung, 2003). It is also shaped by historic traditions and practices in organisations and the wider society (Tatli et al., 2017).

2.3 Gender Inequality in the Chinese Context

In China, women are said to be equal, and the equal status of women's participation in both education and jobs is encouraged under the law (Burnett, 2010). Article 91 of the 1954 Constitution of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) states that women "enjoy equal rights with men in all areas of political, economic, cultural, social and family life" (Burnett, 2010, p.289). However, the role of women in practice is denied (Truong et al., 2017). For centuries Chinese women have been denied equal participation, status, and opportunities with men (Truong, 2013). Women's rights to freedom, dignity, equality, and security at work are limited (Zainol et al., 2019), and gender equality is not achieved (Zainol et al., 2019).

In traditional Chinese society, under the influence of the feudal hierarchy and culture, men and women developed different positions (Fei, 2017). Male identity is externalised, primarily

existing outside the family domain, while female identity is internalized by being family-oriented, as wives and mothers (Tatli et al., 2017). A woman's task is to hone their skills of social development and upbringing within the confines of the family environment (Tatli et al., 2017).

Cultural beliefs play an essential role in gender binaries and divisions, such as the acceptance of male "breadwinner" ideology (Tatli et al., 2017). In the binary construction of gender roles, women are assigned the inferior role in different spheres of life including family and work domains (Banister, 2004; Das Gupta et al., 2003). Thus, women are often led to inequality in family and community by gender concepts and traditions (Tatli et al., 2017). From the perspective of social values, Chinese feminist researchers believe that gender inequality in the employment of many women seriously deviates from the core values advocated by the construction of a harmonious socialist society (Chen, 2018).

The era of reform and the marketisation of Chinese society has opened the door for many women to become entrepreneurs and professionals, not just in the role of mothers, but also to create more job opportunities for women (Hershatter, 2007). However, gender inequalities are still experienced in China (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). There is significant evidence that women are not treated in an equal way to men, evidenced in gender discrimination and the glass ceiling which are factors that contribute to gender inequality in China's organisations (Fei, 2017).

2.4 Gender Inequality in Chinese Organisations

In the working context, women face several major problems. One aspect is that women are facing recruitment inequality. A study found that 55.8% of women believe that they have experienced inequality in the job search process, while 63.7% of women believe employers discriminate against them "very much" (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020, p. 216). Even men believed (47.6 %) that employers discriminate against women "to some extent" (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020, p. 216). Women's working positions, salaries, and welfare systems are inferior to those of men (Fei, 2017). These problems are even more acute in China's cities, where competition

for jobs is fierce and jobs are plentiful (Chen, 2018). Also, in most organisations, the leadership places more demands on female employees (Tatli et al., 2017). Women are rarely given a fair share of jobs because of the glass ceilings and gender stereotypes (Tatli et al., 2017). Even more serious is that while female employees may hold the same job position, the salary is very different from that of male employees (Fei, 2017). This is a salary differences gap faced by female employees in the working environment. In some rural areas, women face gender inequality of education due to the traditional attitudes that women should have limited access to education (Chen, 2018). Moreover, ineffective legal systems also make it difficult to address gender inequality in organisations (Chen, 2018). This leads to the issue that gender inequality has become a common problem in organisations.

2.4.1   The Glass Ceiling

According to Fei (2007), the glass ceiling refers to a hindrance which limits women or minority groups from accessing pay raises, promotions, and other opportunities present at their workplace due to gender stereotype and social prejudice. Studies on the glass ceiling point to the vertical segregation of women's employment due to discrimination, lack of training, and lack of acceptance by their male peers, which leads to the slow career development of women (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). In Chinese organisations, 'Bamboo Glass Ceiling' is the term which relates explicitly to Chinese culture, patriarchy and hierarchy (societal and organisational), and gender inequality for Chinese women (Leong & Tang, 2016). For example, women in the lower levels of an organisation are much less likely to be promoted than their male colleagues (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Barriers to promotion at the bottom of the hierarchy are particularly problematic. Men are considered first in training opportunities (Ng & Sears, 2017). The lack of organisational support and the inadequate human resource policies and practices to support women have become invisible factors restricting women's promotion to management (Ng & Sears, 2017).

The glass ceiling seems to be an umbrella term describing the barriers for women and which includes a range of causes of inequality and negative consequences (Ng & Sears, 2017). Many scholars have identified several barriers that women face in advancing to management positions due to the glass ceiling (Ng & Sears, 2017). On the one hand, at the micro-individual level, there are some necessary conditions that prevent women from advancing to management, such as gender role socialisation (Schweitzer et al., 2011), and lower self-efficacy and self-esteem than men (Ng & Sears, 2017); at the macro-level, barriers exist such as work-family conflict, lack of family and social support, and career sponsorship (Fei, 2017). On the other hand, at the macro-organisational level, barriers exist such as organisational culture in terms of negative attitudes and social prejudices towards women (Tatli et al., 2017), gender stereotyping in senior positions (Lee & James, 2007), and inadequate human resources/legal policies and practices that support women. These factors contribute to stifling the upper limit of women's promotion to management (Ng & Sears, 2017). Furthermore, historic, political, and economic changes also have a policy bias toward gender issues, which plays an important role in shaping senior opportunities for women in organisations (Tatli et al., 2017).

2.4.1.1 Job segregation and pay inequality

In China, research has shown gender inequality in the workplace is mainly manifested as high recruitment standards for women, such as job segregation, which can create pay inequality (Fei, 2017). Job segregation refers to the concentration of different genders in different positions due to social factors, which is one of the main ways of gender discrimination in organisations (Fei, 2017). Job segregation is defined as discrepancies within the workplace in matters such as wage gaps, occupational status, distribution of work based on demographic characteristics of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Barone & Assirelli, 2020). This creates a gender gap resulting in low wages and incomes for women, fewer opportunities for advancement in senior positions, a higher redundancy rate, and re-employment is difficult (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). For instance, in 2013 women made up about 45% of the country's workforce, but on average, women earned 74% less than men (China's National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). In 2018, the average salary of Chinese women was 6,497 RMB, just 78.3% of that of men. A further

advantage of men over women was that in 2017 men's salary increased by 8.7% (China's National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The division of roles is one of the reasons for gender inequality in employment (Tatli et al., 2017). For instance, in the Chinese banking industry the highest-paying jobs are given to men, also causing pay inequality (Fei, 2017; Zhao & Lord, 2016). Due to this gender discrimination, women frequently also bear the main responsibility for unpaid labour, so even if they participate in the paid labour force, their extra work has not been financially recognized (Tatli et al., 2017). Also, Yang and Sooksmarn (2020) proved that 93.35% of the pay gap between Chinese men and women from the same industry was caused by gender discrimination, job segregation, and institutional factors.

2.4.1.2 Gender Stereotypes and Work-Family Conflict

In most Chinese organisations, due to stereotypical gender differences, there is not only an inherent belief that men are capable of certain jobs, but that women are incapable of some jobs (Tatli et al., 2017). For example, flexible working hours help women maintain work, yet also have some negative effects (Yang et al., 2014). One of consequences is a work-life conflict which is related to cause greater work-life conflict which can hinder women from entering work, or limit their ability to work in positions requiring high levels of commitment (Fei, 2017). Compared with male colleagues, women not only face work-life balance issues, but also face great competitive pressure, because many senior positions in organisations have special conditions for women, such as whether they are married or whether they have children (Fei, 2017). Not only do women coordinate the balance between family and work, but they are also given the responsibilities of "good mothers and wives", which has caused a gap in senior management because it is not currently possible to carry out all roles to the required standard (Tatli et al., 2017). The lack of balance in time management, and lack of support, results in reduced economic benefits to the company (Fei, 2017). Therefore, women in China have far fewer opportunities than men to enter senior management positions (Tatli et al., 2017). It may be difficult for women to break through the "glass ceiling" caused by gender stereotypes, reaffirming vertical job segregation (men's dominance in the highest status jobs traditionally) in Chinese organisations (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020).

2.4.1.3 Access to Education

In rural areas of China, women still have fewer education opportunities than men (Zhang, 2013). For example, a study showed young women aged 15-24 could not complete their secondary schooling in some rural areas (Yang et al., 2014). Due to the economic conditions, and Chinese traditional beliefs, although equal educational opportunities were provided for women, female students had uneven access to basic education (Yang et al., 2014). However, there is still an educational gap between men and women due to gender differences, culture, and family values (Yang et al., 2014). Thus, if females do not receive the same level of education as males, it has a huge impact on their future job choices and the equal opportunities that they receive (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020).

2.4.1.4 Legal Environment

According to existing research, some women have no legal awareness against domestic or economic violence (Fei, 2017; Tatli et al., 2017). Both have a significant impact on women's ability to survive, live and work freely (Chen, 2018). For example, in many urban areas' women are still unaware of their rights to legal protection against harassment in the workplace, communities, and public places (Tatli et al., 2017). The imperfection and under development of these policies have led to the fact that women have had to make decisions that compromise and limit their goals, resulting in gender inequalities (Tatli et al., 2017). For instance, the Chinese retirement policies which close off women's access to the top positions resulting the selection of top management (Lee Cooke, 2003). The retirement age of men and women in China is not the same. 60 years old generally refers to the retirement age of men (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). The retirement age varies according to the work intensity of the job (Lee Cooke, 2003). Male leaders and workers must be at least 60 years old; female leaders must be at least 55 years old, and female workers must be at least 50 years old, and have a continuous working experience or working experience of 10 years (Lee Cooke, 2003; Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020).

2.5 Confucianism and Gender Equality in Management

There has been a long-running debate concerning Confucianism's affinity with the patriarchal society that endangers gender equality (Koh, 2008). Gender equality is not directly addressed in early Confucianism, but rather scholars have interpreted this as women being considered unequal to men and taking a lesser role because of this (Zhang, 2019). They are expected to serve their husbands as masters over them and play the caregiving role in the home while men go out as providers for their families in Ancient Chinese society (Zhang, 2019). Feminist scholars stated that Confucianism is related to 'male culture', and women's values and roles belong to their families rather than careers (Koh, 2008; Fei, 2017). They believed that traditional Chinese society accepted the principle of social hierarchy, because the beliefs are linked to Confucianism's influence (Zhang, 2019). For instance, feminist scholars indicated the introduction of Chinese Confucianism led to a change in gender relations in Ancient Chinese society (Tan, 2003; Truong, 2013; Rosenlee, 2012). Rosenlee (2012) commented how Confucianism restricted the role of Chinese women to the discourse of the patriarchal family. Due to acceptance of the nature of hierarchy, women must be faithful and obedient to the father and husband's duties (Jacobs et al., 1995). Feminist scholars also argued that the value ascribed to the role of women in society indicated that men were superior to women (Lin, 2000). This became the highest requirement and criterion for the development of women's careers in Chinese organisations, where the ideal standard for the women's role is unequal to that of males, thus there is limited the space for women to develop in organisations (Lin, 2000).

Confucianism emerged against the background of feudal chaos and disorder in Ancient China (Baumann et al., 2019). These traditional views of feudal chaos resulted from political and historical reasons, leading to different interpretations by feminist scholars (Tan, 2019). However, Confucianism revealed individual regulation of social order, using language in communication, building harmonious relationships between family and society, and reducing military conflict between states and power in Ancient Chinese society (Yao, 2000). Although Confucianism had a strong influence on Chinese culture and was probably influenced by

Chinese culture (Fei, 2017). This research is interested in the potential contribution of Confucian philosophy to promoting gender equality.

Further, Chan (2000) argued that women can be educated under Confucian philosophies, Confucian ethics also benefit women entering a career. Confucian philosophies have been connected to the promotion of equal opportunities for female workers (Chan, 2000; Woods & Lamond, 2011). For instance, "The benevolent person loves others (*rén zhě ài ren*)" is a foundational concept of Confucian philosophies, promoting the equality between men and women since women can be educated and loved in society (Clark & Wang, 2004); women's reciprocity and responsibility under Confucian wisdom could enhance their senior position in the workplace (Kezar, 2004).

Additionally, Zhang (2019) indicates that there is a deep-rooted trend that stems from the widespread hierarchy, *Yin and Yang* could bring the friend relationship into a family, which is not detrimental to the status of Chinese women and affirms the nominal male dominance. Baumann et al. (2019) quote Yao (2000) to illustrate Confucian values, which would be made possible for family, organisations, and society through Confucianism:

> *To set up guidelines for good family and social life, Confucius reinterpreted the meaning and methods of learning and education of Confucianism, and believed that the promotion of the tradition had great leverage on improving the quality of social life, was the key to overcoming present problems, and would lead the people to a refined and redefined world of goodness and harmony (p.23).*

Furthermore, the Confucian ethos "Education for all without discrimination (*yǒu jiào wú lèi*)", fully emphasises ethical teaching for every person, regardless of social class or wealth (Chen & Xie, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of education is to help all kinds of people develop ideal personalities, whether rich or poor, girl or boy, to form a virtuous education system (Chen & Xie, 2015). According to Chen and Chung (1994), Confucianism's emphasis on education is also considered to be an important promoter of economic modernisation. Through education, skilled and talented people can use economic resources more effectively (Chen & Chung, 1994).

Confucian teaching and ethical virtues could help women managers regulate their own behaviours, such as self-regulation, justice, and wisdom, in order to maintain management ethics (Clark & Wang, 2004). As Confucian benevolence is seen as a positive influence on the role of women through its reciprocal and respectful elements (Clark & Wang, 2004), Confucian values still have a strong influence and coexist within organisations in China (Gao, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, inequality for Chinese women still exists, and some scholars have pointed optimistically to areas of Confucianism that can support gender equality. Conversely, some scholars are still attribute inequality to the implantation of Confucian philosophies in China (Fei, 2017). In light of the potential for contribution to the existing research, this study explored the following research question: How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in Chinese organisations? There is no doubt that "gender inequality" has not been completely eliminated as mentioned earlier. The inequality experienced by Chinese women in organisations, such as the glass ceiling, gender stereotypes, job distribution, and pay gaps demonstrate continued unequal opportunities (Fei, 2017; Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). This occurs at all levels which supports the argument above. Thus, the research can respond to calls from within the Chinese context (Yao, 2018) to examine how Confucianism can help to undo inequality in management.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses both gender equality in Chinese organisations and Confucian philosophies as a starting point for exploring how Confucian philosophies can contribute to redressing gender equality in Chinese organisations. Gender inequality refers to unequal opportunities, treatment or perceptions of individuals based on gender differences. It stems from the social construction of gender norms and patriarchal ideas, which lead to discrimination and inequality. Confucianism has been accused of promoting gender inequality (Nuyen, 2001; Koh, 2008), and some studies associate Confucian principles with gender equality (Clark & Wang, 2004). As a result, this research seeks to make up for the gap in research and better understand how Confucian values can promote gender equality in the context of organisations.

The next chapter will outline key Confucian ideas drawn upon in the design and analysis of this research.

Chapter Three: Confucian Philosophy

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the background concerning Confucian philosophies, offering an overview of Confucianism and its influence in China. The elements of Confucianism to be discussed in this chapter include the Five Relationships (*Wulun*), Five Ethical Principles (*Ren, Yi, Li, Xin, Zhi*), Harmony, and *Yin and Yang*. This chapter will give Confucianism context in order to better understand the analysis of findings and discussion in the next chapters.

3.2 Overview of Confucianism

Confucianism is one of the philosophies that have much influence on Chinese history (Chen & Chung, 1994). It was founded in 551-479 BC by the famous Kong Qiu who was also known as Confucius, this happened during the spring and autumn period in 770-476 BC (Chen & Chung, 1994). The core content involving Confucianism has its main focus on benevolence, loyalty, filial piety, etiquette, integrity, knowledge, forgiveness, and many other aspects (Yao &Yao, 2010). The influence of Confucianism exists even today and the Confucian culture has spread almost everywhere in China (Yao, 2000).

Confucian education was derived and developed from the Chinese teaching on the meaning of life by Confucius (Chen & Chung, 1994; Yao, 2000). Confucianism emphasised the morality of individuals and governments and the correctness of social relations, justice, and sincerity (Rainey, 2010). Rainey (2010) describes Confucianism as a school of thought which originated from China. This philosophy was followed by the Chinese people for a period of more than two millennia and it has transformed through time (Choi et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Rainey (2010), Confucianism was commonly identified as a scholarly tradition, a political philosophy, and a way of life based on social and human values. Confucianism preached moral ethics and a top-down approach to ethics (Shafer, 2000; Seow Wah, 2010). For example, ethics from Confucian philosophy could determine obligations, virtues, and morality (Ryan, 1998;

Woods & Lamond, 2011). With an influx of global information and culture, Confucian philosophies were used to establish social orders and to guide the moral rules in China, and therefore has become a key factor that continues to influence modern families and governs their education, occupation, work arrangements, gender roles, and marriage choices today (Fei, 2017). Lin and Baker (2019) indicate that Confucius sought to incorporate foundational values such as compassion and tradition back into society. These values were seen as an essential part of providing and restoring harmony in the larger society (Lin & Baker, 2019).

Confucianism has a strong influence in China. For example, Confucian philosophies have penetrated Chinese culture for 25 centuries (Arcodia, 2003). Confucian philosophies and the educational wisdom of Confucius have been integrated into the structure of Chinese culture and are deeply rooted (Arcodia, 2003; Rarick, 2007). The view of Confucianism on gender roles includes the hierarchical relationship among family and society (Fei, 2017). It is reasonable to assume that the influence of Confucianism has also been extended to the characteristics of Chinese culture (Rarick, 2007). Confucian principles have not only exerted an important influence on Chinese politics and culture, but also influenced the ideology and behaviour of Chinese people (Jiang et al., 2019). Principles of Confucianism can be understood in the following aspects (Wang et al., 2005), including Five Relationships (*Wulun*), Five Ethical Principles (*Ren, Yi, Li, Xin, Zhi*), Confucian education, Harmony, and *Yin and Yang*.

3.3 Five Relationships (*Wulun*) of Confucianism

Confucianism deeply considers the virtue of ethics (Gao, 2017; Jiang et al., 2019). In reality, "Five Relationships" have been applied in the field of family, community, and social interpersonal relationships (Gao, 2017), and have recently been applied to upper and lower levels of organisations in China (Jiang et al., 2019).

"Five Relationships" refers to the relationship between the ruler and the governed, between the father and the son, between husband and wife, between brother and brother, and between relatives and friends (Gao, 2017). It can be used to guide harmonious relations within the family, interpersonal, and social relations (Gao, 2017). These relationships can be applied to

standardise the moral principles (Gao, 2017). The relationship between 'father and son' has also been applied to relationships between teacher and student or master and disciple (Gao, 2017). Specifically, "Five Relationships" as used by Confucianism is the affirmation of values and norms of individual behaviour in social systems, interpersonal relationships, the relationships between superior and subordinate, moral relations, and equal relations in groups (Wang et al., 2005). Confucianism as a moral system focuses on the five relationships, such as emperors and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, and friend-friend relationships (Gao, 2017; Wang et al., 2005). All of these relationships involve roles and shared obligations (Wang et al., 2005). Everyone should perform their responsibilities and take appropriate actions to improve social behaviours (Wang et al., 2005).

For example, Nuyen (2001) described the particular roles ascribed to individuals, such as love among children and parents; righteousness among subordinate and sovereign; individual responsibilities among wives and husbands; appropriate order among the young and elderly; and honesty among friends. However, Tu (1993) argued that the tradition of Confucianism not only defined the ruler-minister relationship as a father-son relationship, but also defined this relationship as friendship and an equal relationship. For example, his research showed that relationships with power holders did not need to be confrontational (Tu, 1993). Ministers could maintain an independent attitude towards the king, serving as a teacher, adviser, critic, or friend of the king, not just being regarded as an obedient servant (Tu, 1993). Gao (2017) supported Tu's (1993) research and pointed out that the relationship of reciprocity can also be expressed the "Five Relationships". This is where the concept of equality is fully expressed in Confucianism, and it is also Confucius's "reciprocal relationship" (Gao, 2017). Gao (2017) utilised the equality and reciprocity as a framework to explain differences in social status and power.

3.4 Five Ethical Principles of Confucianism (*Wuchang*)

The Confucian Five Ethical Principles (see Table 2) are known as the *'Wuchang'* and include *Ren* (benevolence/humaneness), *Yi* (righteousness), *Li* (propriety), *Zhi* (wisdom/knowledge),

and *Xin* (trustworthiness/integrity) (Jiang et al., 2019). Confucian principles could guide behaviour and virtues (Jiang et al., 2019).

Table 2: Confucian Five Ethical Principles (*Wuchang)*

Five Ethical Principles	Contents
Ren	Humanity/benevolence; Love people
Yi	Righteousness; Under the guidance of moral judgments; Meet appropriate standards
Li	Propriety; Social duties through moral rules
Zhi	Wisdom; Make good judgments
Xin	Trustworthiness; Loyalty to one's superiors; Moral principles

Adapted from Jiang et al., 2019, p.2.

Ren (benevolence) is considered to be the highest principle and moral standard of Confucianism (Yu, 2017) and is interpreted as respect for the dignity of human life or human nature and self-esteem (Jiang et al., 2019). Ren, as the basic human capacity for benevolence, combines all the values of morals, gender, leadership, and behaviour (Zhao, 2018), and is relevant to social relationships (Yao, 2018). In the *Analects*, Confucius said that "*the benevolent person loves others*", individuals should treat others in a caring, humane, and friendly manner (Gao, 2017).

Yi (righteousness) refers to the ability to do the right thing. A necessary prerequisite for a person of noble character, so that he will become a *'Junzi'* (Person who aspires to achieve a status of "noble" or "exemplary person" through virtues of self-cultivation) (Giaimo, 2020; Tan, 2019). As the Confucius said: "A noble person in the world does not advocate or oppose anything, just do what is right" (Jiang et al., 2019).

Li (propriety) refers to a code of conduct that is polite and guides an ethical behaviour (Jones & Liu, 2017). *Li* links personal character with social responsibility through the social order of communication or behaviour, and is full of polite charm (Jiang et al., 2019).

Zhi (wisdom) includes moral wisdom, the wisdom of education and learning, and the ability to accurately assess situations and solve problems (Jiang et al., 2019). *Zhi* requires individuals or leaders to make correct judgments and when mistakes occur, they should be rectified in the right direction (Jiang et al., 2019).

Xin (trustworthiness) refers to loyalty to the moral principles and social rules of superiors, subordinates, friends, and business partners (Jiang et al., 2019). *Xin* advocates that individuals cannot lie or violate their promises to others, and must be honest and trustworthy (Yu, 2017). Confucius attaches great importance to honest communication between friends (Yu, 2017). The essence of *Xin* is equality and fairness, and the mutual equality means that the subject has a free personality and the ability to cooperate with their own rights and obligations (Yu, 2017). This is the prerequisite for mutual cooperation and mutual trust (Yu, 2017).

3.5 Confucian education

According to Confucianism, education focuses on enabling inculcation of *Ren* (humanity) through the *Li* process (normative behaviors) thus allowing the learners/leaders to understand and broaden their minds and behaviors of management (Jiang et al., 2019). The Confucius' educational program was aimed to educate young person regarding the positions they hold within the society (Tu, 1979). The ultimate purpose of enlightening people was to bring up a better government with educated leaders (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020).

Confucius had the belief in educability and equality for all individuals (Tu, 1979). He viewed education as a way of making transformations (Tu, 1979). Confucius attaches great importance to moral education and believes that the purpose of his training is to cultivate ethical person (Yu, 2017). According to the different characteristics of students, teaching students in accordance with their aptitudes (Tu, 1979). An important implication of the principle is that

people can receive education regardless of their intelligence, no class, and without discrimination (Tu, 1979).

3.6 The Concept of Harmony

Harmony is an important theme in Confucianism. Seeking harmony through good relationships creates a harmonious society (Chen, 2018). The harmony is developed to rebuild balance and address conflict and problems in family, community, and society (Yao, 2000). According to Confucianism, conflict originates from the relationship between oneself and others, and harmony is the balance that results from adapting one's own needs to the requirements of others (Yao, 2000). In a practical sense, Confucius encourages people to realise the ultimate importance of social order, allowing everyone to fulfill their responsibilities in accordance with their assigned roles (Wang et al., 2005). Confucius believed that people and things are in harmonious relationship and retain mutuality under moral codes (Wang et al., 2005). In addition, to perform duties and solve the conflict, Confucianism believes filial piety, loyalty, justice, and reciprocity could guide their ethics, establishing a conflict-free, group-oriented, harmonious relationship system (Wang et al., 2005).

3.7 *Yin* and *Yang*

In Chinese philosophy or medicine, *Yang* is the complement or opposite of *Yin* (Fei, 2017). *Yin* and *Yang* were initially fulfilled through Taoist ideals of self-order, and later they were integrated by Confucianism (Chin et al., 2020). This combination has been stable for centuries (Chin et al., 2020). According to the *I Ching* (Chin et al., 2020), everything, whether tangible or intangible, has both *Yin* (symbolised by continuous lines) and *Yang* (symbolised by broken lines). In general, *Yin* represents soft power, passive energy, and female aspects, while *Yang* refers to hard strength, positive power, and the masculine principle in nature (Chin et al., 2020; Fei, 2017). Therefore, *Yin* and *Yang* can be constructed as a whole (Chin et al., 2020). For example, when *Yang* rises to its strongest, *Yin* will begin to reiterate itself, and vice versa (Chin et al., 2020). The dialectical and philosophical nature of the ontology and epistemology of *Yin-Yang* thought are similar to Western paradox thinking (Redding, 2017). Both refer to two

interdependent elements of the same thing, which coexist simultaneously and collaboratively over time (Chin et al., 2020).

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the background and understanding of the relationship between Chinese society and Confucianism, and gives some relevant theories of Confucian principles in order to better understand the analysis of the findings and discussion. For instance, Five Relationships shows the significance of people, family, and relationships for community and society. Five Ethical Principles form an ethical system that guides the ethical behaviour in family, group, and society. Confucian had the belief in education and equality for all individuals. Harmony aims to enable harmonious and peaceful relationships within society and equitable relations between women and men. The next chapter will describe the research methodology.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the research design of this study, which utilised a qualitative, interpretive research approach and thematic analysis to conduct the data analysis of transcripts. The second section introduces relevant participant information, followed by a description of the data collected from the interviews. The chapter ends with an overview of the data analysis process and provides a summary of this chapter.

4.2 Research Design

To address the research question 'How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in Chinese organisations?', this qualitative study adopted an interpretive research approach and thematic analysis. Qualitative research is adopted when a problem or phenomenon needs to be explored and provides a deep understanding of the issue through communicating the experiences and stories of participants (Silverman, 2016). The qualitative data can be observed and recorded through vivid conversation, it focuses on the words, opinions, and thoughts of the respondents rather than numbers (Milena et al., 2008).

It is suggested that researchers must consider their assumptions about what is reality (Piórkowska, 2016). The research question as the basis of research can reflect the social reality constructed by researchers and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, defining the ontological and epistemological positions of the research is essential (Ladyman, 2007). Ontology helps researchers understand how they can determine the nature and existence of the objects they are studying (Ladyman, 2007). Epistemology is important because it affects how researchers design their research in an attempt to discover knowledge (Ladyman, 2007). Thus, in the study of ontology and epistemology, in this study the interpretive position is that the reality relies on the interpretation of the researcher and the qualitative data of experiences of

Confucian experts. Therefore, it is essential to apply a qualitative interpretive approach in this research.

An interpretive approach focuses on experiences to identify the 'why' or 'how' of issues that exist within a community or organisation (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). Interpretive research is based on the assumptions that social reality is shaped by human experience and explores the subjective interpretation of participants in a socio-cultural context. Interpretive research is well-suited to exploring the hidden causes behind multidimensional social processes, where quantitative evidence may be biased or difficult to obtain by comparison (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013).

4.3 Participants

Participants were selected due to their expert knowledge and experiences with Confucian philosophies. Participants were recruited for this study through public websites and via personal networks. The researcher recruited participants via emails and WeChat in advance and provided the background of the researcher and the topic and purpose of this study. Five participants agreed to take part in the study. The sample consisted of a mix of three male and two female participants. In alignment with the recruitment criteria, each of the participants had teaching experiences of Confucian philosophy in an academic capacity. To ensure their privacy, a numerical code was attributed to participants (Table 3). There were two managers working at Confucius Institutes and three participants working at universities. Participants had a mean age of 50 years. All participants teaches/work in a Philosophy Department in a University and Confucius institute.

Table 3: Participant Profiles

Code	Work Position	Years of Teaching Confucianism
#1	Associate professor in University	Teaching for 30 years
#2	Manager at the Confucius Institute	Teaching for 16 years; 5 years for managing
#3	Professor, Director of the Confucius Institute	Teaching for 22 years; 8 years for managing
#4	Associate professor in University	Teaching for 30 years,
#5	Professor in University	Teaching for 25 years

There is no personal information connecting participants to academic or other organisations. Signed consent forms (see Appendix C) were completed by each participant before data collection.

An application for ethics approval for this research was submitted to Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) for the meeting held 23 March 2020. Final ethics approval was granted on 31 March 2020, application number 20/92 (see Appendix A).

4.4 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were adopted for this research because this method can provide in-depth details in terms of social experiences and situations, and answer the research question (Kvale, 2008). Through the semi-structured interviews, participants also provide reliable and comparable qualitative data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Due to restrictions imposed by the New Zealand government due to COVID-19, the researcher conducted the research from China. Online interviews were arranged for a convenient time and conducted online also due to COVID-19 restrictions. Figure 1 outlines the indicative interview questions that served as a guide for the interviews.

Figure 1: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Confucianism in the workplace:

As we know, Confucian principles are mainly concerned with people. In your view:

1. How do Confucian principles relate to management/leadership of others?

2. How would Confucian principles guide someone to navigate a competitive culture?

3. 'Ren' means to be benevolent to people, how would you describe 'Ren'? What is the impact of 'Ren' in organisations?

4. What opportunities could an understanding of Ren or other Confucian principles provide to managers?

Confucian perspectives on gender:

5. Some (scholars/feminists) consider women's oppression and inequality to be rooted in Confucianism. How do you consider this view?

6. What is the Confucian perspective on the role of men and women in society?

A) Can you speak to the role of:

   a. moral principles (Li)

   b. social duties (Xin)

   c. wisdom (Zhi) and

   d. humanity (Ren)

and the opportunities they might contribute to gender equality in society generally?

B) In management specifically?

7. What can Confucianism tell us about individual agency in life vs support or the influence of others?

A) Does this differ according to gender?

Before the interview, participants were provided with the participant information form (see Appendix B) and consent form (see Appendix C) and had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify the purpose of the research. As the participants were based in China, the participant information sheet and the consent form were translated into Mandarin. They were also asked to complete a consent form before the interview, which was signed and returned to the researcher by email. Semi-structured interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes and were conducted with participants through the medium of WeChat or Zoom. As Confucianism is based in traditional Chinese language to express philosophy and ideas, the five experts felt better able to explain these concepts using traditional Chinese and consequently made more extensive statements in their responses. The researcher recorded the interviews and took notes in Mandarin. The transcriptions were conducted in Mandarin which were sent to participants

via email, and each participant was asked to confirm the accuracy of the transcript and respond within two weeks. Mandarin transcripts were then translated into English for data analysis. Participants read their completed transcripts noting any preferred adjustments or additions to their transcripts.

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying topics and patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It has been suggested that this is the most suitable qualitative method to use because it has the critical components needed to perform various analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis focuses on examining the meaning of the data as a theme or pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study adhered to the six-step process designed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and explained below.

I began the first step identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) which is for the researcher to focus on reading and re-reading the data (the interview transcripts), familiarising themselves with the data and noting down ideas, potential codes and key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). I familiarised the data collected by transcribing the recorded audio conference interviews, analysing the text thoroughly, taking notes, and understanding the data (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016).

Next, I began collating and coding data, generating initial codes with interesting features in a systematic data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Table 4 describes the initial codes from participant responses in order to identify key themes.

Table 4: Initial Codes from Interview

Data extract one	Codes
"Individually, I think gender equality is improving due to my work experience but still exist gap. Also, as the professor for teaching Confucianism there are various voice of gender inequality… While Confucianism acknowledges that "all people are born equal", so how to understand the social structure can promote the idea of	• Gender equality • Equal rights • Social structure influence

inequality to society, to our work, and to form different roles…."	
Data extract four	**Codes**
"Some scholars focus on the position of female in the family and defined as an extension of Confucianism in the organisation structure, complains that social inequality, hierarchy due to Confucianism. By contrast, the Confucian values reflects the harmony in our family, in workplaces, and in our society…"	• Women's role • Organisations • Confucian values • Harmony

I searched for themes from the gathered codes and identified the major points and familiar meanings that repeated throughout the data (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). It is important to note that each theme was based on the information received through considering selected codes and whether it helps to address the question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Table 5 presents a summary of the codes and extracts, which corresponded to the questions from interviews. I summarised the responses to each question to find the key themes. Also, the process of summarising the data in my own words was conducted manually.

Table 5: Data Extract Two with Summary

Data extract two	Summary
Actually, I have been teaching the eastern culture many years. Em…from a teacher to a member of Confucius Institute, compared with male colleagues, there is a challenge for me… Confucianism guides me both moral standard and how to solve the conflict with some difficult situations, and help me become a good leader.	One female participant had been teaching for many years, while working at Confucius Institute in a senior position. Confucianism played a positive role in her organisation and guided her to become a good leader, addressing the issues.

Two steps were involved for reviewing themes. First, the researcher revised the codes and themes through checking whether the original data extracts were an accurate reflection of the data. Then began the next step of analysis: Ongoing analysis of the themes was sorted in terms of macro (social, legal, and economic), meso (organisation) and micro (family and individual) levels which provided a constant comparison in relation to addressing the research question.

Lastly, the themes were grouped into three main aspects specific to the research question. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested "identifying what perspective of the data and research questions the theme fits under" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). Thus, the research also aims to explain the meaning of each theme and concept to improve its effectiveness in answering questions. Three main themes are explored. Figure 2 provides a brief description of four overarching themes; the themes will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Figure 2: Overarching Themes

Theme 1:	Theme 2:	Theme 3:
Confucian ethics in management	*Causes of gender inequality*	*Confucianism and gender equality*
Subtheme:	**Subtheme:**	**Subtheme:**
Benevolence and love	Broader social changes	Harmony
Leadership qualities	Women and small men	Education for all without discrimination
Confucian principles		
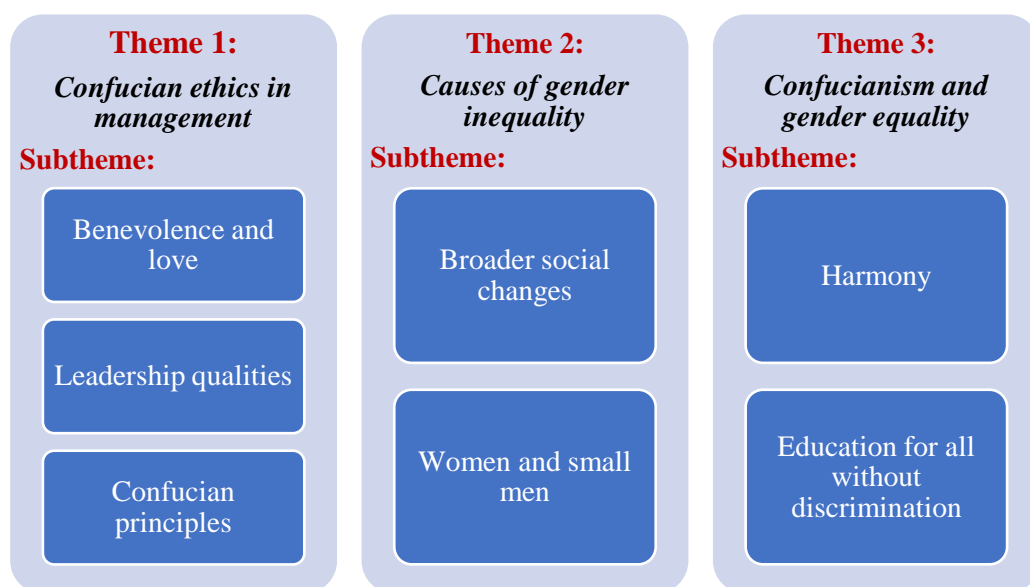
4.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed methodology and description of the analysis for this research. Thematic analysis and an interpretive research approach were adopted, and the semi-structured interview provided an open opportunity for the researcher to identify the research questions. Through the data collection and analysis process from transcripts obtained from the five Confucianism professional, three overarching themes are explored. The next chapter will discuss the findings and further discussion section.

Chapter Five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter collates and presents the findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with five Confucianism professionals and experts. Following thematic analysis of the interviews, this chapter presents the three overarching themes that were identified: Confucian ethics in management, causes of gender inequality, Confucianism and gender equality. Each overarching theme also had subthemes which are explored below along with excerpts from the interviews with Confucian experts. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key findings.

5.2 Confucian Ethics in Management

All participants discussed Confucian principles and how Confucian philosophies contribute to good management in the workplace. Some participants suggested that Confucianism can provide basic standards of good management practice. Others discussed how Confucian principles provide positive values for leaders in workplaces. Three main subthemes relating to Confucian ethics in management are identified in Table 6 below. First, participants highlighted benevolence and love for good management. Secondly, participants note the importance of moral virtues and how Confucianism articulates qualities of good leaders. Finally, Confucian principles provide a basis for decision making that helps regulate behaviour toward more ethical choices and decisions.

Table 6: Confucian principles and their impact

Confucian principles	Description of their impact
Benevolence and love (*Ren*)	As a guideline of good management
Wisdom (*Zhi*)	As a practical application for leadership capability
Trustworthiness (*Xin*), Righteousness (*Yi*), Propriety (*Li*)	As an ethical function for quality management

5.2.1 Benevolence and Love

Three participants talked about benevolence and love (*Ren*). All of them mentioned *Ren* was a foundational principle in relation to good management and connected people. One participant reported that enacting benevolence and love in the workplace could create a culture of trust and respect. Another participant explained Confucianism could offer more trust based on benevolence and love in the workplace, such as leaders trusting in staff and showing respect for employees. Also, Participant 2 felt employees working in organisations should feel as warmly as if they were with their family due to the benevolence and love. They noted:

"In our university, we strongly advocate "management of benevolence and love" and "management of human interest", which plays a positive role in overcoming the problems of overall materialisation and individualism in the work process." (#2)

Two participants discussed how benevolence and love had guided them during their work and life and explained how Confucianism has effectively created a positive cultural value system and had guided good management within the management of their organisations. In relation to benevolence and love, all participants perceived that benevolence is the central category and the highest moral standard of Confucianism. One of the participants mentioned that for organisations to apply benevolence a means an ideal of serving their customers, employees, and the society must be established. This participant talked about when some companies are in trouble, outstanding organisations would take the initiative to lend a helping hand and solve their issues. Participant 3 used Japanese companies as an example of management which adopted benevolence as a management strategy to achieve success.

"An important aspect is the management of benevolence. Japanese companies adopt the management system of benevolence as described in Confucianism, and emphasise being people-oriented as the starting point of management, thus forming a human resource management mode in Japanese companies like Toyota Motor Corporation…Toyota has also implemented the employee suggestion system, which encourages employees to offer suggestions for their company. Once the suggestions are adopted, they will provide spiritual rewards…This is the application of benevolence that Japanese management has absorbed from Confucianism…" (#3)

One participant emphasized the role of benevolence for establishing good relationships within the company. This participant explained that many business managers apply *Ren* as a guide to deal with interpersonal relationships and business management guidelines. Benevolence and love lead to harmony and unity, according to a Participant 1.

> *"In my view, Ren means 'benevolence', it refers to a kind of philanthropy and links to every area in organisation. In our institute, it is absolutely an ethical point in the moral category and maintains a good attitude towards our staff and work. According to Confucianism, Ren affected both manager and employee in the organisation. There was an invisible rule that was not in the regulations, so that everyone in the organisation did not only consider themselves. By contrast, everyone in their workplace would learn from each other, and maintaine the interpersonal relationships." (#1)*

> *"Ren also extends the feelings of family, workplace, and society. It contributes to the unity and harmony of the organisation…Great emphasis is placed on the intimacy and harmony of interpersonal relationships within the organization. For good management, it is necessary to maintain a harmonious relationship with its subordinates, create a harmonious atmosphere within the organisation, and establish a harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment when doing business. In this way, its influence can be broadcast inside and outside the organization, and its decree can run smoothly within the organization." (#2)*

According to Participant 3, Confucian ethics like *Ren* is basically humanistic and virtue-based in nature. The concept of benevolence had given him the guidance of wisdom, and also allowed him to take the initiative to discover and learn from talented people in his work, which helped his good management.

> *"The Confucian philosophy speaks of 'benevolence' which means humanism. 'The benevolent person loves others* (rén zhě ài ren)*', from family love to thinking about social love, for example, parents love their children, children should love their parents, which is defined as making love from the beginning. Cultivate love, from love and take care of parents first, and then apply it to work. Let's takes the manager as an example. When our manager cultivates the social benevolence so that the people of the society have a benevolent heart, then the relationships between people (upper and lower relationships, interpersonal relationships or family relationships) are not difficult to deal with." (#3)*

5.2.2   Leadership Qualities

One participant reported that in order to be effective Confucianism believes that the fundamental standard of a leader's qualification lies in his moral character. Therefore, applying this moral virtue could educate people, enabling their capabilities to develop to be used systematically in their workplaces, thus improving their leadership qualities. For example, three participants explained Confucianism emphasises "governance based on virtue" (*wéi zhèng yǐ dé*), advocating the leader's model moral behaviour. Participant 3 mentioned Confucius said:

> *"He who rules by moral force is like the polestar, which remains in its place while all the lesser stars do homage to it."*

This participant explained the assumption that an ethical leader is like the polestar, in a position around which all the other stars revolve. For example, leaders should start with themselves and pay attention to their own self-realization of virtue if they want to achieve the effect of "polestar" in workplaces, and modelling and promoting leadership qualities.

> *"Confucianism tells us that the leader's task is to conduct virtue, when a person has personal virtues, he will show family virtues in the family, embody professional ethics at work, and show social morality in society…Hence, the situation of society is different, it will become a good environment, friendly relationship…managing a business, managing an organisation, and managing a community so all of them need the role of effective leadership due to Confucianism motivates the model of such leaders." (#3)*

Participant 3 added, in this sense, an ethical virtue could serve as a powerful motivation and following this virtue could act as a guide for leaders. Another participant also mentioned the leaders' action and words played an upward and downward role in his workplace, thus driving the improvement of the moral level of the whole organisation.

"The feature of Confucianism for leadership is 'governance based on virtue' (wéizh
èng yǐdé). What is the purpose for governance or politics? It means how do we
master the ethical virtue and contribute it to their organisations and employees." (#3)

"For example, Confucian principles pay attention to management, it is to cultivate
people 'match of virtue', we prefer to call 'Jun Zi' (person of noble character). Those
gentlemen (both women and men) were originally people who gave orders, and
cultivated into a person with moral connotation. It seems as 'people need to know
honor and disgrace, know right and wrong, and take responsibility', then the person
will become a good manager/leader." (#3)

Similarly, two participants commented that Confucianism promotes qualities of leadership such as integrity, justice, conviction, perseverance, and enterprising spirit. The moral standards of Confucian principles encourage people to be and act better, which then expands to followers. Good leadership qualities create good qualities in employees and a good organisational culture.

"From the perspective of the leadership, due to the positive Confucian principles like
Righteousness (Yi) and Wisdom (Zhi), the manager will have social ability, make a
right judgment, and wisdom." (#2)

"Confucianism will let more managers master the 'Trustworthy' talents, it will gain
people's trust and support, such as employees and partnership. When dealing with
external relations, enterprises must talk about 'Good faith (Xin).' (#5)

5.2.3   Self-regulation Capabilities

Five participants discussed more specifically the essential role of Confucian principles within organisations and how these principles contribute to self-regulation. Self-regulation capabilities could be an ethical standard guiding a correct way in organisations. Two participants discussed how the virtuous capabilities could guide individuals in their life and work. Participant 4 mentioned Confucius had achieved a deep insight into how an individual examines their self-regulation capabilities, such as applying the trustworthiness (*Xin*) which could enable employees to follow the organisation faithfully; Righteousness (*Yi)* could create righteousness as a management tool, which focuses on not only conducive business cooperation and

friendship, but also attaches importance to economic and social benefits; Propriety (Li) in the Chinese context could be social order in communities. All of these principles could be seen as an action in management, participants reported. For example, one participant mentioned Confucius said:

> *"Ruling* (zheng 政) *is straightening* (zheng 正). *If you lead along a straight way, who will dare go by a crooked one?"*

This text means that leaders should focus on doing the right thing. This participant explained that self-regulation could enable you to manage yourself well, allowing you to manage others well. Another participant reported that if managers make or require employees to abide by rules and regulations, but then violate or even trample on them for not doing so, it is impossible to make other people in the organisation abide by the rules. Therefore, in Confucianism, "cultivate oneself to benefit others" (*xiūjǐ-ānrén*) is important, improving self-cultivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation, also could make employees feel better.

Meanwhile, Participant 3 discussed that the self-regulation capability was relevant when addressing business problems. This participant mentioned Confucianism emphasised the rational character of self-reflection, paying attention to being kind to others, and is strict with oneself. Therefore, the level of cultivation of self-reflection plays a vital role in the success of organisations.

> *"Confucius said: 'cultivate oneself to benefit others'* (xiūjǐ-ānrén) *and when you meet someone with worthless or little character, look inward and examine your own self. Due to Confucius believes that if a leader behaves rightly by positive self-regulation capabilities, there is no need to give orders, and the person will do what he wants; if they don't behave well, even if there are orders made, people will not obey." (#3)*

Finally, two participants also pointed out that self-regulation enabled decision making and helped to transform the code of conduct into more ethical choices and decisions in practice. They reported, for cultivating the self-regulation of the leader, it was not enough to have

benevolence *(Ren)*, but also requires their wisdom (*Zhi*) and trustworthiness (*Xin*), which was guiding the leader to be a good person as their self-regulation capabilities. One participant described that wisdom (*Zhi*) of self-regulation created the motivation, emotions, justice, as well as manners at work.

Participant 4 then illustrated that practical wisdom contributed to his personal and professional lives, citing as an example that the company's structure and procedures were examined with social order *(Li)*. *Li* was the self-conscious based on the ethical value of self-regulation, and via self-reflection and self-cultivation, extending the outstanding capability of good leaders in practice.

> *"In this way, talents can achieve the realm of holiness and reach a higher realm. Through the self-regulation, managers also could guide the basic standard of the organisation." (#4)*

One of the participants reported the differences of decision-making traits which include the ability of judgment, management, prediction, coordination. However, building these ethical values via self-regulation capabilities would examine the issues and lead to more ethical behaviour in organisations.

5.3 Causes of Gender Inequality

Participants were asked directly about the connection between Confucianism and gender inequality. Three participants pointed primarily to broader social and cultural contexts to explain the continued existence of inequalities. In relation to Confucianism, one specific text from the *Analects* was raised by participants, as it is often used as evidence of gender inequality embedded in Confucius philosophy.

5.3.1 Broader Social Changes

First, two participants reported that social changes, such as political and social factors, had contributed to different gender roles. Rather than an emphasis on Confucianism, participants largely emphasized how gender discrimination usually occurs as a result of 'complex adaptive social systems' (#3), economics (#3), and education (#5), which tend to be inherently gender biased on knowledge, skills and performance (#5).

> *"Women's oppression and inequality do not originate from Confucianism, but are caused by various factors. Since ancient times were mostly in farming societies, social status was often determined on an economic basis. Men who were strong bodied made more economic contributions than women, so the corresponding social status was also higher than that of women. Women's oppression and inequality not only occurs in China, but in the history of Western countries, women's status is also far lower than that of men, and they often become victims of rights transgressions. India, which is deeply impressed by the West, still retains the caste system, and the status of women is far inferior to that of men. Therefore, women's oppression and inequality do not originate from Confucianism"* (#5)

Participants reported the role of men and women were different before Confucianism as illustrated in the quotes above, in that men focused on work and social activities, while women focused on family care due to gender labour division. One participant mentioned Confucianism believed that reasonable arrangement and optimisation of the division of social responsibilities was important, and most of the ancient work required more physical effort which could only be carried out by males. However, Participant 3 discussed that it was not the case that women are lower, just that some people have interpreted it this way. For better understanding, three participants pointed out that the unequal gender role is due to political and social factors. For example, one participant illustrated that political factors resulted in different responsibilities between men and women. The following quotes show how participants discussed the role of political and social influences on changing gender roles.

> *"...the patriarchal society gradually replaced the matriarchal society. Men increasingly became the protagonists of material production and social structure. The status of women declined and succumbed to male domination. As a result, men*

have an unprecedented advantage and privilege, and women as a group are gradually excluded from the field of public life. I really didn't think these changes [came about] due to one thought control our society." (#1)

"...Before the Industrial Revolution, when the machine had not replaced human power, people's production and life required manual labour. Therefore, we need men go outside [to] work and earn money, and they also have power. Confucianism respects benevolence and care about the family relationship from the past period; women are very important for family and society, and could build a harmonious relationship..." (#2)

One participant discussed the social changes lead to the traditional beliefs which caused the labour gender division of "men working outside and women working inside" which restricts women's behaviour. However, Confucianism also contributed to inequality in the Ancient society. This participant explained why most people thought women's role should be to continue to contribute to their family as it was in the past, even though this phenomenon still exists now in organizations due to the traditional beliefs.

5.3.2   Women and Mean people

During the interview, when asked the question about whether some (scholars/feminists) consider women's oppression and inequality to be rooted in Confucianism, respondents reported that there was no direct relationship between Confucianism and women.

Two participants identified one key phrase which has had an impact on the view of women from a Confucian lens, namely:

"Only women and mean people seem difficult to provide for" (wéi nǚ zǐ yǔ xiǎo rén wéi nán yǎng yě).

One participant noted that this text has been used as the main evidence that Confucius despised women. This participant reported Confucius was influenced by society. There was a discrepancy between genders in Ancient society, prior to the introduction of Confucianism, but

is not what Confucius intended. This participant reported that "Xiao ren" refers to mean people, most of whom are opposed to the noble person of high morals. Women were a relatively independent social group for historical and political reasons, which lead to different role division between men and women. There existed various limitations for women who participated in social activities. This made it difficult for them to achieve equal status, this unequal status was linked to Confucian thoughts. Thus, Confucianism therefore should pay attention to and take more care of women's role. Participant 1 also argued that under the political background, women were regard as playing an essential role in the family. This participant mentioned that from the perspective of equality, the meaning of this text was to emphasise the role women on the harmonious relationship between women and family.

> *"In the text it does not mean female discrimination…the problem of women inequality is not caused by a thought, and it is even less likely to be caused by Confucianism. First, female discrimination is caused by the patriarchal result of the past period. Second, female inequality is caused by the evolution of the political system. Third, this is a historical product." (#1)*

Moreover, according to Participant 1, Confucianism had become a product of the feudal era and extends to the unequal status of women. Hence, the meaning was not clear and would be interpreted differently.

> *"It was a product of the time, could not [attribute] blame to Confucius. In fact, in feudal times and imperial period, the low status of women was the cause of the political system, and there was a misunderstanding of the correct meaning of 'women and mean people', Confucius's original intention was not like this." (#3)*

In addition, according to Participant 3, the woman in ancient Chinese is understood by cultural scholars as "unmarried girl" or "child", or an absence of adult mentality, "so we need to get along well with them" (#3); Small men refers to people with bad conduct and imperfect morality. However, this participant also mentioned that many scholars or feminists who oppose Confucianism are "here to make a fuss about women/gender and Confucianism." (#3)

Participant 5 also stated that the differences between men and women are natural differences, like 'sex differences'; but the causes of inequality are the effects of social construct. According to participants, it is clear that the sex of men and women cannot be changed by Confucianism, and the social norms have existed since ancient times due to political factors.

5.4 Confucianism and Gender Equality

Despite some of the challenges, three participants described ways that Confucianism could help gender equality. Two key subthemes identified related to harmony and Confucian education contributed the women's equal right through "Education for all without discrimination (*yǒu jiào wú lèi*)". This occurred by self-cultivation to family management, orderly development of the community, and bringing peace and harmonious relationships to the society. The other two participants provided their views that Confucianism could create balance and equality when informing social practices.

5.4.1 Harmony

When asked about "the opportunities they might contribute to gender equality in society generally", two participants mentioned "Universal Harmony (*dà tóng*)". According to participants, Universal harmony (*dà tóng*) refers to the time of peace and prosperity envisioned by Confucian scholars when all the people under heaven are one family, equal, friendly, and helpful to each other. These participants described harmony (*hé xié*) in terms of relationships. For example, one participant indicated the peaceful relationship in the family, extending to society. Each person pays attention to honesty and harmony. In organisations, it was suggested that managers not only love their employees, but also enable peaceful interpersonal relationships.

One of the participants illustrated harmony was also connected to balance and equality, such as between family and work, and also provided suitable opportunities for reciprocal relations between men and women. For example, one participant explained Confucianism is based on

Taoism's idea of balance like Yin and Yang, which been extended to describe this relationship between men and women. This participant then mentioned men and women are not independent but exist in overall balance. If inequality and abuse of women are against "way of heavens" (*tiān dào*) an unbalanced relationship exists. Another participant also discussed the concept of harmony and keeping harmonious relationships was the essence of Confucianism, and this promotes differences of labour division between men and women, that they should have different and complementary roles. This is of great consequence for the correct understanding of equality at work.

Meanwhile, Participant 3 discussed the social and family relationship. In the family, there may be fathers and mothers, and there are subordinates and superiors at work. To deal with these basic relationships needs to be measured in harmony.

> "*If the organisation or ruler can recognise and reach the 'balanced harmony'* (zhōng hé*), everything in the world will be in a correct and appropriate position, harmonious and orderly, 'let each get its due (*gè dé qí suǒ*)'and they can achieve mutual prosperity and development.*" (#3)

One participant highlighted the importance of harmony even in competition. Participant explained from the Confucian perspective that the Master said:

> "*A person of noble character will never be complacent about anything he/she does, except archery. But even so, when he/she won, he/she bowed politely before being promoted to the winner. Therefore, even in this competitive situation, he/she showed that he/she was a noble-person.*"

He felt that if businesses want to compete, they must compete in pursuing virtue (*Li*), compete in learning and harmony, and give courtesy to each other and have a long-term cooperation. That is the Confucian spirit of harmony. This was expressed by participant # 3 in the following way:

> "*The world is shared by the people and contains different natural attributes such as ethnicity and sex. Confucianism is a culture that promotes social harmony and*

equality, it exists in our families and work, it tells us that people with high moral character and outstanding talents can be selected to manage organisation, honesty and harmony among people will bring about a competitive corporate culture."

5.4.2 Education for All Without Discrimination

The final theme mentioned was the notion of "Education for all without discrimination" (*yǒu jiào wú lèi*). In Confucianism, everyone should have equal rights to enjoy education regardless of social class, and participants suggested advocating education starting with emphasis on children's education, but without mentioning gender. Some scholars consider this might lead to inequality. However, participants reported Confucius' humane education included women, and through family moral education to the society. For example, Confucius said:

> *"In instruction, there is no such thing as social classes, education for all without discrimination."*

This suggests that students should be treated equally in teaching, and not divided according to wealth or status. Participants 3 and 4 reported Confucianism provides a humanistic ideal for a non-discriminatory approach in work and education. Interestingly, one participant argued that Confucianism promoted equality in education in past times, that it has rejected all forms of discrimination and advocated equal treatment for gender roles.

> *"...people's class concept is formed by historical development, there is a gap between wealth, nobility, and sex. This also exists in Western countries. Confucianism has proposed that everyone is equal before education in the feudal period at the cultural level, which made great contributions to the equality of human rights and the emancipation of women's thoughts. Women have equal right to receive the same education as men." (#3)*

> *"He (Confucius) does not distinguish between class, region, wisdom or stupidity, as long as someone is willing to be taught, according to culture, everyone will be taught…The idea of promoting equality in education is still respected until now." (#4)*

One participant was more critical about the application of this text, questioning:

"A lot of people are curious about 'Education for all without discrimination', but why are there no female students?"

This participant emphasized two factors. First, "Education for all without discrimination" emphasises these differences should not affect opportunities for learning. For example, Confucius advocated equal knowledge for all kinds of people. Secondly, another participant also explained that due to the historical background at that time, women were not legally allowed to engage in many high-risk industries, and so the law contradicts this Confucian principle, which impacts gender equality. However, Participant 2 mentioned that some feminists doubted it could make improvements for women. For instance, this participant reported Confucius had no female students which became a source of opposition. Therefore, there were a few scholars who argued against the Confucianism.

"Confucius said: human, in their nature, are alike; but by practice they become widely different. I have been engaged in education at least 25 years. Confucian thoughts of education and 'Teaching in accordance with different aptitudes (yīn cái shī jiào)' have a huge influence on me. I am always reminded that my attitude towards students is not to choose my students because of wealth, wisdom, and personality, but to put the correct values to everyone, it's a real equality…" (#2)

"The natural attributes of human beings may be born with different sex of men and women, and some may be born with intelligent wisdom, or may be disabled, but Confucianism tells us that these scholars, everyone's social responsibilities and obligations can be achieved through education, we have never had skin differences, gender differences to spread a wide range of knowledge." (#2)

"First looking at the differences of gender roles, and examine whether the educational equality system behind it was perfect. Confucianism was born in the age of inequality, but I disagree that it becomes the proponent of educational inequality." (#2)

Participant 2 made arguments in line with feminist thought. This participant was not hopeful about Confucianism's ability to promote gender equality. She believed that feminists might be

standing up for the unequal treatment and lack of opportunities for females, but they could not have a deep understanding of Confucianism context.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has summarized participant's views and understanding of Confucian philosophies in relation to gender, management, and the workplace. Participants believed the main influence on continued gender inequality to be due to wider contextual factors, such as the evolution of the political system, economic relations, social structure, and legislation, and was not directly influenced by Confucian values or philosophy. All participants agreed that the original intention of Confucianism was not to discriminate against women and had various thoughts on how Confucian principles could influence management practice and gender equality. Participants highlighted Confucius' emphasis on benevolence and love, harmony, and promoting positive social norms for behaviour in wider society and the workplace specifically. The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the literature and attempt to address the research questions outlined earlier in this study.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the themes outlined in the previous chapter in the context of the literature review (Chapter Two) and understanding of Confucian philosophies (Chapter Three). In order to answer the research question: "How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in Chinese organisations?" This chapter will also provide a critical discussion on the potential way to promote gender equality through the application of the findings. Specifically, this chapter will discuss the Confucian experts' perspectives, connected to literature on factors affecting gender inequality. The chapter also concludes with possibilities for responding to the research question.

6.2 Confucianism and Gender Inequality in Chinese Organisations

Although Chinese women have made progress in participating in organisations in the context of economic influence, positions available to women are still dominated by males (Fei, 2017). The literature review (Chapter Two) pointed out various examples of women's lack of gender equality in Chinese organisations (Chen, 2018; Fei, 2017). These include job segregation and pay inequality, gender stereotypes and work-family conflict, access to education, and the legal environment (Chen, 2018; Fei, 2017; Tatli et al., 2017). These restrictive factors have impacted on women's promotion and lead to the glass ceiling in Chinese organisations. There are various views on the role of Confucianism in gender inequality. Feminist scholars extend this gender inequality as being due to the influence of gendered social norms by Confucian philosophies (Fei, 2017). Fei (2017) states that Confucianism is related to 'male culture' in both family and organisations, prejudice against women's values, and roles that existed in Ancient Chinese society. Tatli et al. (2017) reinforced that the strong barriers faced by females in Chinese organisations were shaped by cultural beliefs. However, Confucianism is seen as a positive influence on the role of women through its reciprocal and respectful elements (Clark & Wang, 2004). For instance, Tan (2019) pointed out that Confucianism guides the moral duty of women

and men in an ethical code, known as *"Li* (propriety*)"*. Both women and men could become *"Junzi (*sages, noble person*)"* through the self-cultivation of "*Li"*, despite women and men performing different social roles in Ancient Chinese society. Chan (1998) also contends that Confucianism challenges gender inequality by teaching men and women the equality of their innate moral instincts and abilities.

According to Confucian experts who took part in this research, there is no direct relationship between Confucianism and women, but referenced a linkage with "*Only women and mean people seem difficult to provide for*". This research summarises the finding that "Xiao ren" refers to mean people, most of whom were opposed to the noble person of high morals. Women, as a relatively independent social group, had various limitations imposed on them due to the result of historical and social conditions. The text that women and small men might have different views from Nuyen (2001) indicated the Confucianism was linked to women who are difficult to raise, unequal, powerless to their fathers and husbands with facts that they were not allowed to even have any chance of participating in public life. In fact, women's role was influenced by Ancient Chinese society. Women were the ones who had issues of barrenness, talkative and jealous, and could not manage to get men who liked them according to the Chinese culture (Chen, 2018). Confucianism is a product of the historical period of the feudal era, which influences on men and women both inside and outside of the workplace. Therefore, the unequal hierarchical system for women in China is an obstacle to gender norms caused by traditional historical factors, not by a discrimination of Confucianism. Because males and females had different responsibilities, the Confucianism emphasis on the importance of women's role in the family came about. Besides, according to Confucian experts, there existed discrimination in Ancient Chinese society, and acceptance of the social role between women and men was not what Confucius intended. The findings show that the Confucian experts also pointed out that gender inequality is caused by a thought or emotion, and actions are informed by thought. Women are ethical role models for family, and their husbands. Confucianism would like to advocate the moral principle to both women and men to become an exemplary person. Linking the social constructs in Chinese organisations to the literature, the major critiques of

Confucianism largely center on the oppression to which Chinese women have been subjected (Nuyen, 2001).

6.3 How can Confucian Principles Help to Break the Glass Ceiling?

Previous research has found that the bamboo glass ceiling is a hindrance that limits women or other minorities from accessing pay raises, promotions, and other opportunities present at their workplace due to gender stereotyping and social prejudice in Chinese contexts(Fei, 2017). In most organisations, gender stereotyping creates a connection that leads to gender inequality in the deeper context of discrimination against women in employment, career choice, and senior positions (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020).

Negative attitudes and social prejudices towards women lead to male and female leaders believing female employees should not be offered higher positions in Chinese organisations (Yang & Sooksmarn, 2020). Moreover, female employees also face the inequality that they hold the same jobs, yet their salaries are not the same as those of male colleagues (Fei, 2017). In other words, there is no fair and equal competition for many female employees, that is why many senior positions only provide for males. Thus, it makes gender inequality a widespread problem. Through interviews with Confucius experts, this study identified Confucian philosophies that could influence management practice and be used to promote the possibility of gender equality in Chinese organisations, through the application of benevolence and love, ethical leadership, harmony, and non-discriminatory education.

6.3.1   Confucianism: A Principled Approach to Management/Leadership

Existing research suggests male leaders are considered more decisive, enterprising, and patriarchal, while female leaders show caution, meticulousness, reluctance, and hesitation in leadership styles (Fei, 2017). The literature revealed that Chinese organsations have adopted traditional cultural values of the role and status of women, such as the valuing of 'masculine traits' in leadership roles, evidenced by the leadership in organisations that seem to have been

dominated by men (Koh, 2008). This has limited women's progress into leadership roles, such as gender stereotyping in senior positions (Lee & James, 2007). However, the findings of Confucian experts emphasised the Confucianism view on benevolence and love. Benevolence advocates equality and loves all people without distinction. Thus, this research also introduces the principled approach of Confucian's *Ren* which advocates the capacity of virtue-based leadership, and the right direction in acts expanding to address the issues of gender inequality in Chinese organisations.

6.3.1.1 The Benevolent Person Loves Others

According to participants in this study, the promotion of "The benevolent person loves others (*rén zhě ài ren*)" for benevolence and love (*Ren*) affected the importance of relationships and building the ethical traits of leaders in organisations. "The benevolent person loves others (*rén zhě ài ren*)" was suggested by Confucian experts in management to encompass respect and care for everyone equally, to realise an ideal society. First, this research introduces the concept that benevolence and love could address the unequal treatment prevalent in gender inequality. For instance, Confucian concept of *Ren* reduces discrimination or social prejudice against women. Based on *Ren*, the interpersonal relationship is the core of Confucianism because it believes that people are related. "Five relationships" plays multiple roles in family and society: father, son, brother, friend, husband. The application of the moral principle of etiquette is based on the nature of a relationship (Fei, 1992). Both parties in every relationship should abide by Confucian ethical principles to achieve interpersonal harmony (Li, 2006). Because the concept of *Ren* is similar to feminist care ethics (Li, 2000), it may provide a useful philosophical basis for alleviating gender inequality. Also, reciprocity in relationships can be seen as a democratic concept that may contribute to gender equality (Hall & Ames, 2015). As the spirit of benevolence and love requires people to care for everyone, it could lead to more flexibility in how employees' juggle family and work. Due to women being stereotyped to be nurturers and caregivers in organisations, benevolence and love could be used to treat employees with a friendly/positive attitude.

Congruent with Clark and Wang (2004), benevolence and love (*Ren*) is seen as a positive influence of the role of women in organisations. This research confirms that building benevolence and love (*Ren*) could be seen as engendering the positive value of equality in organizational culture, and women's role could provide good guidelines for leaders.

Secondly, the leaders have the opportunity to use their great influence to guide moral behaviours in organisational culture. Specifically, a culture of benevolence and love, could lead to valuing the 'soft' traits that women are stereotyped to possess. This could lead organisations to offer higher positions to women, thereby changing their status. The leaders have a great influence on the positive way their thinking guides moral behaviours in organisational culture. According to Confucian experts, benevolence and love (*Ren*) could provide the humanistic equal value in Chinese society. Thus, a self-building benevolence and love (*Ren*) within individuals (micro-level) and organisations (meso-level) has been shown to be beneficial for guiding one's humanistic thought, resulting in an effective action. This research suggests that introducing benevolence and love (*Ren*) for the leaders could ensure the good performance of all the employees are treated equally and fairly, raising awareness of the importance of fairness and equity in management development. It could be a measurement of positive attitude/thoughts, as the foundation of supplementary ethics, avoiding inequality within the organisation, because many unequal behaviours are first caused by negative thoughts (Fei, 2017), and the equality of humanism (*Ren*) can achieve gender equality.

6.3.1.2 Building Ethical Leadership

Confucian experts in this research stated, "leaders could achieve the effect of the polestars (the passion and emotional drive that provides motivation)." Through the polestars' efforts, achieving the ethical leadership in management. Thus, this research applies methods of promoting leadership qualities in terms of leaders in the workplace, such as through self-cultivation and self-regulation through building ethical leadership, "Doing right, achieving good", for gender equality in organisations. It suggests that building ethical leadership would

benefit management development, and managers would learn to recognise the positive value underpinning moral codes in organisations, and women would receive increased attention under positive ethics in Chinese organisations.

First, concentrating on self-cultivation could promote a leader as a good example of subordinates at all levels. Their movement, every action, and deed, could have an upward and downward effect, thereby driving the improvement of the moral level of inequality in practice. Confucian experts in the interviews had reported that the Confucian principles focus on humanity to create an equal relationship of human-based management so that superiors and colleagues could understand and cooperate with each other, contributing to gender diversity in organisations. As has been discussed, one factor of gender inequality in organisations is the discriminatory way in which women are treated, such as the perceived differences in the abilities of women and men, which promotes job segregation and fewer jobs for women. Therefore, this research suggests that applying Confucian principles to provide an ethical action could address the inequality of job segregation. Self-cultivation of the ethical leadership could build the *Xin* (trustworthiness) between leaders and employees. Yu (2017) claims that because the essence of *Xin* is equality and fairness, equality and fairness would enhance the competencies by receiving the ethical values in their workplaces, also have the ability to cooperate with their own rights and obligation in organisations.

Besides, the Confucianism principle "propriety (*Li*)" as normative behaviours which emphasises moral action in organisations could contribute to the issue of the gender norms in building ethical leadership. For example, the Confucian experts used quotes such as "governance based on virtue (*wéi zhèng yǐdé*)" with emphasis on the importance of ethical leadership. Compared with the literature, the issue of the gender norms leads to inequality between women and men. Valuing only masculine traits in leadership disadvantages women in organisations. However, this research suggests that "propriety *(Li)*" also could justify moral behaviours for the right of the women and correct the actions of organisations. In other words, prioritising *"propriety (Li)"* has the potential to enhance the value of qualities that women may possess, thus evening the playing field. Specifically, addressing a valuing of masculine traits

that disadvantage women, *"propriety (Li)"* could allow an individual to become a model of virtuous conduct, thus leaders (micro-level) could apply self-regulation for them and promote their competencies to achieve a high moral level in organisations. This satisfies Tan's (2019) concept of gender equality in morality. Competent leadership means that women and men can perform the same moral behaviour on the same standard and avoid inequality in such moral behaviour in Chinese organisations. On the one hand, by establishing ethical leaders, leaders could conduct good management, guide the human-resource-oriented management system, eliminate gender hierarchy barriers, and provide equal opportunities to every capable person without being restricted by gender. For instance, Confucian ethical principles (*Ren-Yi-Li*) need to be learnt and cultivated in the context of relationship throughout leaders' management, thus it is a lifelong learning process (Li, 2001; Tu, 1979). For Confucians, learning and education is the way for self-cultivation and to obtain wisdom (Li, 2001). Applying the Confucian thoughts on learning and self-regulation or self-cultivation could promote the women's rights. On the other hand, through the establishment of ethical leadership, leaders could establish their authority, deal with interpersonal relations, become virtuous people, and increase their personal charm.

6.3.1.3 Harmony: Creating Collaborative Cultures

Previous research suggests Confucian values enhance gender inequality through gender relations between men and women. The Confucian experts interviewed described there was a misinterpretation of Confucianism, and disagreed that women's unequal status was due to Confucian principles. Based on the previous literature and the Confucian experts' responses, this research suggests a harmonious approach could promote gender equality in management. This could encourage respecting differences and creating collaborative organisational cultures. This research also suggests that harmony would cause a balance and equal relationship between women and men working together, leading to diversity and inclusion.

The Confucian experts pointed to the way for addressing inequality between women and men. They used the harmony to illustrate the gender relations and balance. Relating to Chapter Three,

Confucian harmony was based on Taoism's idea of balance. Consistent with "*Yin-yang*" (Fei, 2017), which has been extended to describe this relationship of balance between men and women. Thus, this research promotes the application of harmony to address inequality problems between women and men in work-family conflicts. Confucian experts who took part in this research pointed out that sex might distinguish between women and men biologically, as the literature mentioned. This research introduces the "let each get its due (*gè dé qí suǒ*)" approach to gender equality in management generally. For example, it could allow women and men to play to their strengths as individuals and contribute to the organisation, in this way, women are not only limited to positions which under-represent their ability, thereby achieving equality and balance in organisations. Also, harmony as an ideal outcome could form gender mutuality. Gender mutuality refers to the reciprocal relationship between women and men in diversity within organisations, fixing the gap of gender norms of Confucianism (Tan, 2019). By contrast, Confucianism brings the challenge of gender mutuality that both women and men could have equal duties within the family, organisations and wider society. Harmony could make an organisation become diverse with women and men and handle work-family conflicts in a harmonious and equal way.

6.3.1.4 Non-discriminatory Education

Confucian experts interviewed indicated that Confucian thinking promotes equality and not discrimination. Every person could improve competence through education and become a pillar of society. For instance, participants in this study pointed out that Confucius put forward the possibility and necessity of education, advocating "Education for all without discrimination (*yǒu jiào wú lèi*)". Everyone could become a person of cultural virtue through receiving an equal education. Confucian experts who took part in this research emphasised the importance of nurturing Confucian education, regardless of social class or wealth, everyone has an equal right to education and training. This is consistent with some views in the literature (Woods & Lamond, 2011), and is in line with those who suggest Confucian education has been connected to promoting equal opportunities for female workers. As the literature identifies that a lack of

training can limit women's career development (Fei, 2017), findings from this research suggest that drawing on the Confucian principle of non-discrimination in education can support efforts to educate all to provide a better position in the labour market.

Furthermore, this research confirms that Confucius' thought of "non-discrimination" breaks the restrictions of class and inequality in relationships. Unequal social prejudice between women and men has been reported in the literature, and a long history of traditional values and beliefs imply male dominance, resulting in an unequal distribution of jobs and education (Tatli et al., 2017). These findings reflect on Confucius' educational principle that breaks the feudal traditional class concept and imbues all with the concept of equality. It provides further support for the definition of gender equality noted by Rolleri (2012a) in the literature, "Gender equality can be broadly implemented through equal access to and use of resources (p.50)". Therefore, according to this study, the Confucian notion of equal education for all would allow women equal access to and use of resources in education and work.

First, the notion of equal education for all could be directly relevant to management regarding education and training prior to the workplace. This research provides support for the findings that Confucian education allows everyone to enjoy the right to receive knowledge. It can thus be suggested that addressing the previous unequal studies of women in education and employment in China, and introducing the education equality approach, could offer women increased employment regardless of geographical location. It seems that sex at birth, environment, economic and political factors all have an impact on the status of men and women, but education and training could improve individual abilities and enable them to become excellent employees, thus achieving equal access to resources.

Additionally, it is therefore likely that such connections exist between gender equality and training and development in management. For example, as this research confirms, Confucian experts applied the Confucian education principle and paid attention to carrying out targeted equal education according to the individual characteristics of each student. It can therefore be assumed that introducing ways to women will be equally considered in training and

development opportunities and thus have the ability to develop same skills as men. Therefore, in Chinese organisations, an approach of equal opportunities in education would mean ensuring all employees receive equal training, promotion and assessment, enabling people with moral integrity in society without chaos and confusion, and effectively promoting work efficiency, which has become a positive factor to break the 'glass ceiling' and promote gender equality.

6.4 Chapter Summary

Research suggests that gender inequality in Chinese organisations is perpetuated by fierce competition, poor interpersonal relationships, and work-family conflict, which is further influenced by gender norms and expectations caused by socio-historical and cultural expectations. Through the literature review and interviews, it can be seen that the values of Confucianism are affected by macro social-cultural factors, which are also the key factors that lead to gender inequality in Chinese organisations. For instance, the Confucian experts who took part in this research agreed that wider socio-historical factors have contributed to ongoing gender inequalities and highlighted their influence on the interpretation of Confucius' philosophies and on Confucius himself. However, this research also points to some hopeful intersections for Confucianism and gender equality.

In this chapter, a critical discussion of Confucianism and gender inequality in Chinese organisations, provided a potential way of addressing the glass ceiling phenomenon in Chinese organisations. For example, a Confucian principled approach to management/leadership would allow for benevolence, ethical leadership, and education for all. Harmony also could be an outcome or goal for balancing the gender roles in organisations, achieving a harmonious relationship within family, organisations, and wider society. In the next chapter, a summary of recommendations will be presented, along with the conclusions of the research and areas for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This research sheds light on gender inequality in Chinese organisations and points to some hopeful intersections for Confucianism and gender equality. In the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

First, gender inequality is pervasive in the Chinese context. Gender discrimination and glass ceilings play an essential role. A large number of female employees in China are experiencing gender inequality. Compared with men, they are paid less, have unequal job opportunities, and have fewer senior positions in organisations (Fei, 2017). Such unfair and unequal treatment plays a negative role in the career development of female employees, whose job progression is maintained at a low level. Gender inequality is not well addressed in most Chinese organisations, and some scholars considered the main causes of gender inequality to be due to Confucianism (Fei, 2017; Tatli et al., 2017). However, according to conversations with Confucian experts, the problem of gender inequality exists by broad social changes in Ancient Chinese society, and the cultural and social development that has flourished over the past three decades.

This research points to some effective ways to address the barriers of women's inequality in Chinese organisations by applying Confucian principles. For instance, female workers suffered from unequal treatment due to gender norms. First, Confucianism could bring the guidelines of positive thought such as benevolence and love into individual and organisations. Secondly, the leaders also have a great influence on the way their thinking guides moral behaviours in organisational culture, avoiding some inappropriate behaviours. Confucianism brings normative behaviours (*Li*) into action, such as improving the culture of organisations in ways that would benefit women. Building ethical leadership would help to address the barriers associated with discriminatory behaviours in organisations, and it may also determine the further development, making the correct way. Thirdly, harmony as the outcome could be

beneficial for the needs of both men and women allowing them to create respectful, peaceful and harmonious relationships in organisations. Both women and men also play their own parts in responsibilities in families and organisations. Regarding the unequal distribution of women at work, harmonious cooperative relations can contribute to better diversity and inclusion in organisations. Table 7 below outlines a summary of the recommendations for gender equality in Chinese organisations drawing on Confucian philosophies in this research.

Table 7: Summary of recommendations for gender equality in Chinese organisations by Confucian philosophies

Recommendations	Practice	Gender equality	Management/ leadership
Self-building *Ren* principle	Guidelines of positive thought	• Contribute to equal status in positions • Reducing the negative attitude against women	Good management
Self-regulating *Li* principle	Action of moral behaviours	• Making a normative behaviours under legal environments • Equal rewards through moral propriety	Ethical leadership
Harmony	Outcome of relationship	• Equal participation in relationships • Balance the roles for achieving the peaceful/harmonious relationship	Harmonious cultures
Non-discriminatory education	Development of human-resource	• Equal access to and use of resources • Enhancing the abilities through education and training • Making more ways for leaders	Human resource development

This research recommended that Confucian principles are tools to regulate both employee and manager's behaviours for "doing right, achieving good" for gender equality in organisations. Confucianism would contribute the ways of the self-building *Ren* principle, the self-regulating *Li* principle, harmony and non-discriminatory education in organisations. It suggests that building an ethical leadership would benefit management development, managers would learn to recognise the positive value of equality under moral codes in organisations, and that women

would receive increased attention under ethical leadership in Chinese organisations. Meanwhile, leaders should integrate ethical leadership into the core values and visions of organisations, as well as addressing the gender discrimination and glass ceiling which currently exists in organisations. For example, ethical leadership provides a good opportunity for employees and managers to raise their awareness of the importance of fairness and equity in management development, and for the issues of gender inequality such as pay differences to be seriously rethought and the curricula of organisational culture redesigned so as to integrate ethical leadership as a critical management module for leadership. It could help managers to recognise the right values, as well as training the proper norms to be prescribed in organisations and guiding equitable behaviour and harmonious relationships for avoiding the issues of gender inequality. Such a concept of harmony is vital for equal participation in harmonious relationships, balance the roles between women and men for achieving the peaceful goal.

Furthermore, other researchers indicate the causes of gender inequality by cultural influences in China may be more dynamic such as those examined China's current market, economic and social development. However, focusing on organisational practice will have faster more direct impacts than taking the time to change the environment like regulation. Such development in human resources could themselves be actively engaging in performance through non-discriminatory education, enabling better opportunities for career development to be exploited. For example, providing equal access to and use of resources, enhancing the abilities through education and training, and making more ways for leaders through education and training.

However, the limitation of the research is that a small number of participants, but these participants had exactly understanding of Confucianism. Also, they did not have expertise on gender inequalities. Moreover, due to the impact of the COVID-19, online interviews may not be as more effective and intuitive as face-to-face communication. In addition, because the participants interviewed are professional experts in Confucian culture, there may have been reservations to avoid mentioning negative aspects of Confucianism when answering questions. Although this study has established some positive links between Confucian principles and gender equality in Chinese organisations, and provided drawn from gender inequality literature,

it is still necessary to continue to explore the relationship between gender equality and Confucianism in future research. Future research also can look at how some Chinese organisations may already be enacting these Confucian principles and explore how women experience the workplace in Chinese organisations.

Because organisational culture grows dynamically, it requires constant re-reading, re-use, and re-establishment of problem-solving mechanisms to address gender inequality. In doing so, it is the challenge for Chinese organisations to find more positive ways to address the imbalance, using Confucian philosophies in the policy making process. This research suggests that combining Western management concepts with Confucian principles can enable a principled approach to management and leadership that can support greater equality in Chinese organisations. It is an important message contributing to gender equality and making more pathways for women in senior positions in the workforce.

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Appendix A

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)
Auckland University of Technology
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T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

31 March 2020
Nimbus Staniland
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Nimbus

Re Ethics Application: **20/92 How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in senior management**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 27 March 2023.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Ensure that once an the data analysis is complete that it is stored securely on AUT premises in a location separate from the consent forms. Electronic data should be downloaded to an external storage device and securely stored with the supervisor.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.

5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project. For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: gvr9097@autuni.ac.nz; george.thien@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

23/ 02/ 2020

Project Title

How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in senior management?

An Invitation

Kia ora, my name is Joey, I am a postgraduate student from Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. I am Chinese, and born in Shandong province, the same hometown as Confucius. As a final step in my degree, this project is in fulfilment of a Master dissertation from AUT. This research seeks to investigate how Confucian philosophies can contribute to gender equality in senior management. I sincerely invite you to participate in my exciting research, thank you.

What is the purpose of this research?

Although women's social status is constantly improving and they are constantly participating in the decision-making level of enterprises, the proportion of women in senior management positions in enterprises is still much lower than that of men (UN Women, 2017). Despite equivalent education level, there is a gender pay gap in the workplace (Dye, Rossouw & Pacheco, 2012). Research has indicated that Confucianism can have a positive effect on management wisdom, such as self-regulation, social skills and self-learning (Woods & Lamond, 2011; Jing, 2007). Thus, this research aims to understand how Confucian philosophies may provide insights to improve gender equality in senior management. Confucianism professionals and expert with qualifications will also be sought. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

This research seeks to investigate how Confucian philosophies can improve gender equality in senior management. You are being invited to participate in this research because of your expertise in Confucianism. I believe that you have in-depth knowledge that can inform my research in deep and meaningful ways.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research, please contact myself by email (gvr9097@aut.ac.nz). I will respond to arrange a convenient time and place to be interviewed. You will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm your participation in the study before interview via email or WeChat. You will be given the opportunity to ask questions and make clarifications prior to signing this document, and send it back to me by email.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time up until completion of data collection. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You will participate in an interview of up to an hour in length. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential in research outputs. You are invited to participate in an online interview through the medium of Zoom or WeChat. Interviews will be recorded with your signed consent.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is a low level of risk to you in this research. You are able to decline to answer questions that would make you feel uncomfortable. In order to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality, names will not be recorded in interview notes, nor will any identifiers appear in the digital recordings of the interviews. You will not be identified in the final report.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is anticipated that any discomfort or embarrassment would be minimal due to the topic of investigation, the voluntary nature of the study and the ability for participants to refrain from answering any questions should they feel uncomfortable. The interview questions relate to an individual's knowledge and experiences with Confucian philosophies.

What are the benefits?

The research provides an opportunity for you to share your expertise, thoughts and opinions about Confucian philosophies and its relationship to the workplace and gender equality. It is expected that this research will add to the existing literature that focuses on gender equality in senior management.

How will my privacy be protected?

Although interviews will be recorded, interview transcripts will not include identifying information and both consent forms and interview transcripts will be stored separately to ensure that data cannot be associated with specific individuals. You will be recorded in audio form but no identifiers such as your names and faculty names will appear in the transcript. You will not be identified in the final report. In this study, you may withdraw your contribution to the research at any time prior to the completion of data collection without being disadvantaged in any way. You also have the opportunity to review the interview transcripts prior to data analysis. You will be asked to respond within two weeks of completed transcripts noting any preferred adjustments or additions to your transcripts. If there is no feedback returned, the primary researcher will proceed with the data.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

As a participant, you will be asked to sign a consent form and to participate in an interview lasting up to one hour.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will be given two weeks to consider this invitation. You will be given the opportunity to ask questions and make clarifications prior to signing the consent form to participate. If I do not hear from you in a two-week period, I may send a follow up invitation. You will be reminded only once after the sending of the initial email invitation. A non-response to this follow-up email will be taken as unwilling to participate.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a summary of the research findings if you elect to do so on the consent form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Dr Carina Meares, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Name of researcher: Xiaoyuan Gao
Phone: (+64)276677099, (+86)18265161317
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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Nimbus Staniland, (+64) 99219999 ext 6594
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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *31 March 2020*, AUTEC Reference number *20/92*.

Appendix C

Consent Form

Project title: **How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in senior management?**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Nimbus Staniland and Dr George Thien**

Researcher: **Xiaoyuan Gao**

○   I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.

○   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○   I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○   I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○   I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

○   I agree to take part in this research.

○   I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature : ………………………………………………………….………………..

Participant's name : ……………………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *31 March 2020*, AUTEC Reference number *20/92*

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.