A Literature Review of Political Psychology, Political Leaders and Personal Qualities: Mini-Review Approach

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Abstract

Political leaders, especially heads of state, plays a central role in society. However, their personal qualities and the variation have several consequences for their leadership, ideology, decision making, or performance. This paper will provide a political psychology mini-review of the latest literature in the last five years on the personal qualities of political leaders from various sources and produce summarized results and conclusions based on the findings. The mini-review on political leaders' personal qualities was conducted by analyzing 14 peer-reviewed journal articles. These articles are summarized in the Table 1, which contains information about the journal article regarding the title, authors and the year of publication, constructs, samples, main goals of the study, methods and the findings. Various findings of the studies were then documented. First, the cultural diversity has a great influence in analyzing political leaders. Secondly, each leader has their own uniqueness, although they have similarities in general in some constructs. Lastly, constructs that are static in nature—such as traits—basically tend to be stable over time, although in certain situations it can experience a temporary change. In conclusion, the present mini-review paper found several updates related to the personal qualities of political leaders.

Keywords
Political leaders, heads of state, personal qualities, leadership, political psychology.

1. Introduction
The phenomenon of political leadership always receives universal attention. Political leaders such as heads of state—whether presidents, prime ministers, monarchs, or dictators—are the most highlighted (Arana Araya, 2020; Ludwig, 2002). The press covers their agenda, most citizens have an opinion about them, and many scholars and pundits routinely assess the leaders' performance through media and academic outlets (Arana Araya, 2020).

Of course this attention is not without cause. These persons have an exceptional influence, for good or ill, on their political system, whether democracy, autocracy, or oligarchy (Simonton, 1995). As Ludwig put it: "Just as the brain serves as a nerve center for integrating all the incoming messages from the physical body, the leader assumes executive control of the social body, with responsibility for coordinating the actions of its component parts" (2002, p. 7). The output they make then, can influence our lives (Hermann, 2002).

However, political leaders are still persons, despite their exalted status in society. They too can vary in their personal qualities, such as personality and cognitive processing. Therefore, the variation can have consequences for their leadership, ideology, decision making, or performance (Cottam et al., 2016, 2004; Suedfeld et al., 2011; Preston, 2001; Simonton, 1995).

For that reason, analyzing the personal qualities of the leaders becomes important. Between the growing interest in understanding the phenomenon, the question now is to what extent has the political leaders' personal qualities been researched? Furthermore, there are no systematic reviews of the latest political psychology literature

to date. Consequently, the present literature review aimed to provide an overview of the latest empirical research that has focused specifically on the personal qualities of political leaders from a political psychology perspective.

2. Methods

The present study aimed to provide a mini-review of all the political psychology empirical studies concerning personal qualities of political leaders published between 2015 and 2020. The literature search comprised the following databases: Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Web of Science. The following keywords were used in the respective search engines: 'political leaders'; 'heads of state'; 'presidents'; 'prime ministers' and 'leadership'. Each search was performed not only in titles of the papers, but also in the abstracts (where this option was available) for the following reasons: (i) the title words in the paper can sometimes be limited and may not specifically mention political leaders' personal qualities; and (ii) the authors could use various synonyms or different terms that equated to the definitions of political leaders' personal qualities.

Furthermore, there are inclusion criteria which include the following: (i) an empirical study containing new primary data; (ii) specifically focused on personal qualities of political leaders; (iii) not a student thesis; (iv) published in a peer reviewed journal in the English language; (v) and not published in conference proceedings. As for the quality and eligibility criteria, studies published in journals that have a SCImago Quartile Rank of at least Q2 (or an Impact Factor Score of around or higher than 1) will be included in the review. Also, full-text articles are skimmed to further re-evaluate the quality and eligibility of the studies. The flow chart of the literature search and evaluation for inclusion can be seen in Figure 1.

A total of 14 papers were found as a result of the systematic literature search and evaluation. These articles are summarized in the Table 1, which contains information about the journal article regarding the title, authors and the year of publication, sample, main goals of the study, methods, and the findings. Various findings of the studies were then documented.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, the following results were obtained. First, the diversity of linguistic and other cultural features has a great influence in analyzing political leaders (Rabini et al., 2020; Özdamar, 2017). For example, Rabini et al. (2020) found that linguistic characteristics have a great influence on the coding schemes creation for leadership traits identification. Similar case also found in Özdamar's (2017) research regarding the belief systems of political Islamists leaders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in which some procedures of the operational code research agenda, such as coding only transitive verbs, at times seemed to be in conflict with Turkish and Arabic sentence structures and verbs. Apart from linguistic issues, Özdamar also noted that the diversity of 'the movement' led to a certain "level of analysis" problem.

Secondly, each leader has their own uniqueness, although they have similarities in general in some constructs (Çuhadar et al., 2021; Kesgin, 2020a; Özdamar & Ceydilek, 2020; Semenova & Winter, 2020; Dyson, 2018; Özdamar & Canbolat, 2018; Dirilen-Gumus, 2017; Brummer, 2016). For example, the test conducted by Özdamar & Ceydilek (2020) to see whether seven European populist radical right leaders (from both Western and Eastern European countries) share a common pattern in their foreign policy beliefs and whether their foreign policy belief systems are significantly different from the norming group of average world leaders. The results show that the European populist radical right leaders lack a common pattern in terms of their foreign policy belief systems. While the average scores of the analyzed European populist radical right leaders suggest that they are more conflictual in their world views, results also found that they employ instrumental approaches relatively similar to the average group of world leaders. Even in studies with homogeneous samples such as that of Çuhadar et al. (2021) regarding the effect of Six Turkish leaders' style and personality on foreign policy found that there are some distinct differences among the six leaders, although some leaders are more similar to each other than others in terms of their personality traits and styles. These differences were visible in the foreign policy decisions they made.
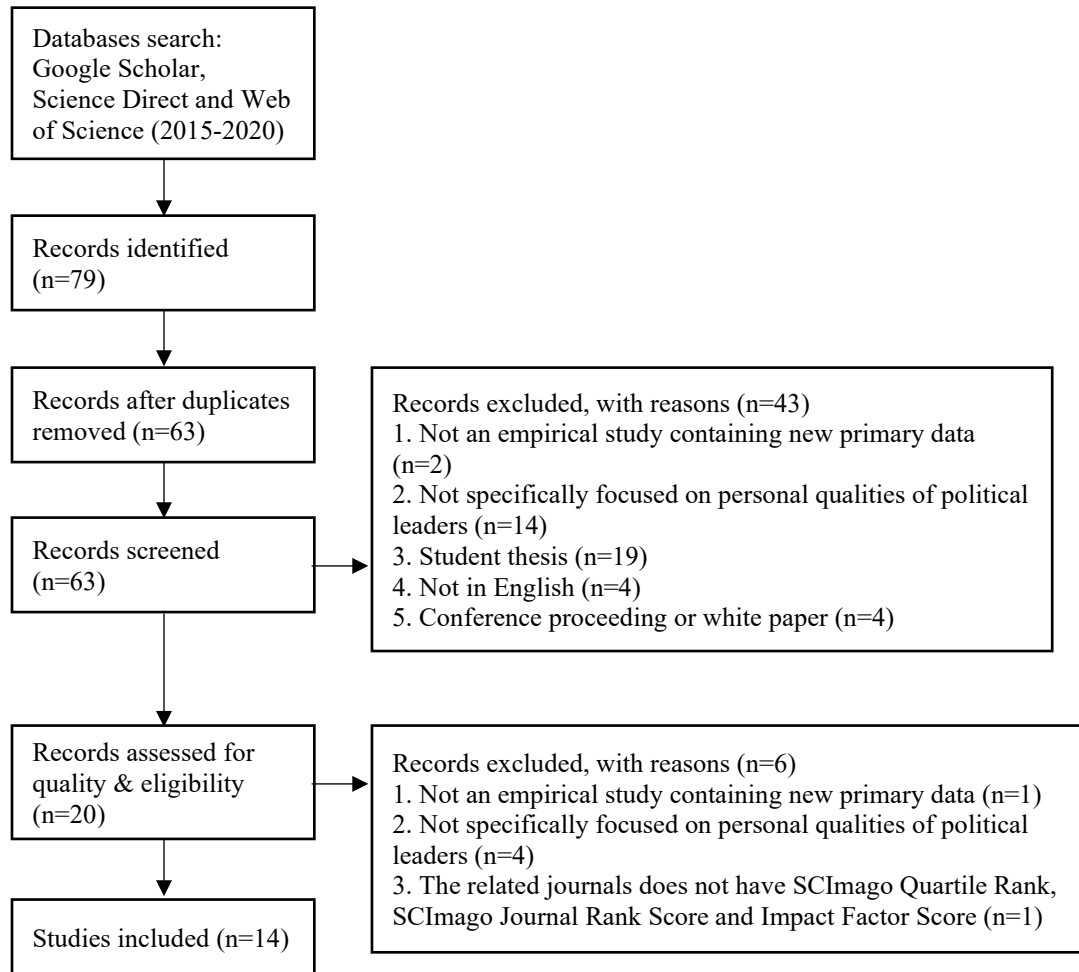
Figure 1. Flow chart of literature search and evaluation for inclusion

Table 1. Article summary

No	Study	Constructs	Samples	Main Goals	Methods	Findings
1	Profiling foreign policy leaders in their own language: New insights into the stability and formation of leadership traits (Rabini et al., 2020)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	17 German chancellors and foreign ministers from 1949 to 2017.	To present a novel Leadership Trait Analysis coding scheme for the German language.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	(a) Linguistic characteristics do have a great influence on the creation of coding schemes for an automated identification of leadership traits. (b) The new coding scheme allows us to address hitherto neglected empirical questions, for instance, pertaining to the stability of traits or the very formation of traits in the first place which are of relevance not only for the understanding of German foreign policy but for the analysis of political leaders more broadly.

2	Leadership Analysis at a "Great Distance": Using the Operational Code Construct to Analyse Islamist Leaders (Ozdamar, 2017)	Operational code	Six Islamists leaders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): Erbakan, Qaddafi, Khomeini, Erdoğan, Ahmadinejad, and Meshal.	To analyze the belief systems of political Islamists leaders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and discuss difficulties associated with this endeavor.	Operational code analysis at-a-distance.	(a) The first difficulty of using the operational code analysis to analyze political Islamists' strategies is the diversity of the movement, which led to a certain "level of analysis" problem. (b) Second, whether to use computerized analysis or traditional hand coding was an important decision. (c) Third, some procedures of the operational code research agenda, such as coding only transitive verbs, at times seemed to be in conflict with Turkish and Arabic sentence structures and verbs.
3	The Personalities of Presidents as Independent Variables (Arana Araya, 2020)	Openness to Experience (one of the Big Five traits)	165 presidents who governed a Western Hemisphere country between 1945 and 2012.	To propose that presidential studies should embrace insights from differential psychology to treat the personality traits of presidents as independent variables.	Expert Survey	Statistical analyses conducted showed that reassessing a study about presidents was enriched when a measurement of their openness to experience was included.
4	Turkish leaders and their foreign policy decision-making style: a comparative and multi-method perspective (Çuhadar et al., 2021)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	Six Turkish leaders: Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, Necmettin Erbakan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Turgut Özal.	To investigate the effect of leaders' style and personality on foreign policy.	(i) Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA). (ii) 20 semi-structured interviews with former government officials, political party members, and advisors of leaders.	(a) In terms of their personality traits, Turkish leaders do not collectively fit in one category. (b) There are some stark differences among the six leaders, although some leaders are more similar to each other than others in terms of their personality traits and styles. (c) These differences were observable in the foreign policy decisions they made.

5	Features of foreign policy birds, Israeli prime ministers as hawks and doves (Kesgin, 2020a)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	Seven Israel's prime ministers since the end of the Cold War: Yitzhak Shamir, Binyamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Ehud Barak.	To explore hawkish and dovish leaders' qualities.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	There are some key differences between hawks and doves in post-Cold War Israel when capturing traits of each individual leader. Hawks share lower complexity, higher distrust and self-confidence than doves; they also differ from doves in having a lower task focus.
6	European populist radical right leaders' foreign policy beliefs: An operational code analysis (Özdamar & Ceydilek, 2020)	Operational code	Seven European populist radical right leaders from both Western and Eastern European countries.	To test whether they share a common pattern in their foreign policy beliefs and whether their foreign policy belief systems are significantly different from the norming group of average world leaders.	Operational code analysis at-a-distance.	(a) The European populist radical right leaders lack a common pattern in terms of their foreign policy belief systems. (b) While the average scores of the analyzed European populist radical right leaders suggest that they are more conflictual in their world views, results also show that they employ instrumental approaches relatively similar to the average group of world leaders.
7	Understanding New Middle Eastern Leadership: An Operational Code Approach (Özdamar & Canbolat, 2018)	Operational code	M. Morsi of Egypt, R. Ghannouchi of Tunisia, and K. Meshaal of Gaza	To examine Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leadership by comparing M. Morsi of Egypt, R. Ghannouchi of Tunisia, and K. Meshaal of Gaza as examples of Islamist leaders to explain their	Operational code analysis at-a-distance.	(a) The three leaders' foreign policy beliefs are analogous to the averages of world leaders. Results also partially support the hypothesis that their foreign-policy propensities are similar to each other. (b) Despite the conventional portrayal of MB leadership, these leaders use negotiation and cooperation to settle their differences in foreign affairs, and the best way to approach them is to engage in a Rousseauvian assurance game that emphasizes international social cooperation.

			political belief systems and predict their foreign-policy behavior.		(c) Results also suggest important implications in terms of mainstream international relations theories.
8	'Fiasco prime ministers': leaders' beliefs and personality traits as possible causes for policy fiascos (Brummer, 2016)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions & Operational code	13 British prime ministers	To enquires whether decision-makers who were responsible for foreign policy fiascos exhibit personality traits or political beliefs that are different from those of leaders who did not end up with policy fiascos, and that thus might have contributed to the fiasco.	(i) Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA). (ii) Operational code analysis at-a-distance.	British 'fiasco prime ministers' do indeed exhibit certain 'extreme' personality traits (e.g., a considerably higher level of self-confidence) and political beliefs (e.g., a greater inclination to pursue conflictual strategies) that distinguish them from British 'non-fiasco prime ministers' and other world leaders.
9	Cross-cultural comparison of political leaders' operational codes (Dirilen-Gumus, 2017)	Operational code	3 leaders of autonomous cultures (the UK, Canada and Australia) and embedded cultures (Singapore, South Africa and Malaysia).	To compare operational codes of political leaders from different cultures.	Operational code analysis at-a-distance.	Leaders of embedded cultures were significantly more cooperative than autonomous cultures after holding the control variables constant.
10	Gordon Brown, Alistair Darling, and the Great Financial Crisis: Leadership traits and policy responses	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Chancellor Alistair Darling	To explain the role of Brown and Darling in the crisis and its aftermath.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	(a) Both leaders score high in proactive beliefs; Brown especially had great faith in his ability to shape economic matters. (b) Brown scores consistently higher than Darling in the use of power imagery, whilst the

	(Dyson, 2018)					Chancellor maintained a significantly more complex worldview than the Prime Minister. (c) Although many factors contributed to the turmoil and ultimate demise of the Brown government, the personality of the Prime Minister, and the clash of policy beliefs and decision-making style with his Chancellor, played a key role.
11	A Motivational Analysis of Russian Presidents, 1994–2018 (Semenova & Winter, 2020)	Winter's motive imagery	Three presidents of Russia since the end of the Soviet Union: Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, and Dmitry Medvedev.	To analyze the motivations of the three presidents of Russia since the end of the Soviet Union: Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, and Dmitry Medvedev.	Motive imagery analysis at-a-distance.	(a) Although there were fluctuations from president to president, and from year to year within each term, the Russian presidents overall tended to be higher in achievement than power. This contrasts with many political leaders from other countries and suggests modification in previous conclusions about the problems of high achievement motivation in politics. (b) The scores of each president are related to the events and policies of that president's term of office. The third term of Vladimir Putin is particularly interesting, because his achievement scores were lower, and power and affiliation scores higher, than in his previous terms. These changes seem to fit with his changes in foreign and domestic policies from his earlier terms.
12	Uncharacteristic foreign policy behavior: Sharon's decision to withdraw from Gaza (Kesgin, 2020b)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon	To inquiries Sharon's decision-making in the Gaza withdrawal case.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	(a) In making the decision, Sharon temporarily became a complex thinker, yet did not change in his distrust or develop empathy to the Palestinians. (b) Leaders can experience a fundamental but temporary change to implement radically different decisions, and confirm that leaders' traits are stable over time.

13	Turkey's Erdoğan: leadership style and foreign policy audiences (Kesgin, 2019)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	To investigate if and why a leader can exhibit different leadership traits and styles at home and away.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	(a) Erdoğan has two different profiles at home and away. (b) Erdoğan's profile from his foreign policy interviews with American news outlets stand out from his other profiles. (c) Among other traits, Erdoğan's task focus changes noticeably among audiences.
14	Personality or Role? Comparisons of Turkish Leaders Across Different Institutional Positions (Çuhadar, 2017)	Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions	Three Turkish leaders: Süleyman Demirel, Abdullah Gül, and Turgut Özal.	To investigate what types of leaders are most likely to change their expressed political personality when they come into a new political position.	Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA).	Leaders' traits are fairly resistant to changes across roles and that task orientation is the most likely trait to change as leaders adapt to different role demands and expectations.

Lastly, constructs that are static in nature—such as traits—basically tend to be stable over time, although in certain situations it can experience a temporary change (Kesgin, 2020b, 2019; Semenova & Winter, 2020; Çuhadar, 2017). For example, a study by Semenova & Winter (2020) that analyzed the motivations of the three presidents of Russia since the end of the Soviet Union—Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, and Dmitry Medvedev—found that the scores of each president are related to the events and policies of that president's term of office. Vladimir Putin's third term is particularly interesting, because his achievement scores were lower, and power and affiliation scores higher, than in his previous terms. These changes seem to fit with his alterations in foreign and domestic policies from his earlier terms (Semenova & Winter, 2020). The same thing was also found by Kesgin (2020b) in his study which followed Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision-making in the Gaza withdrawal case. Sharon temporarily became a complex thinker in making the decision, yet did not change in his distrust or develop empathy to the Palestinians. Kesgin also noted that leaders can experience a fundamental but temporary alteration to implement radically different decisions, and confirm that leaders' traits are stable over time.

Apart from that, there are a few things that should be noted. Among them are related to the constructs studied. Of the 14 journal articles, seven examined Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions, four examined the Operational Code, and one article examined both. The two remaining articles examined Winter's motive imagery and Openness to Experience (one of the Big Five traits) respectively. Another thing that should be noted is related to the samples studied, which still focused a lot on political leaders from the Western Hemisphere.

4. Conclusion

The present mini-review paper found several updates related to personal qualities of political leaders based on the latest literature in the last five years. Some of the updates include the influence of cultural diversity in analyzing political leaders (Rabini et al., 2020; Ozdamar, 2017), and personal qualities uniqueness and temporary change in certain situations (Çuhadar et al., 2021; Kesgin, 2020a, 2020b, 2019; Özdamar & Ceydilek, 2020; Semenova & Winter, 2020; Dyson, 2018; Özdamar & Canbolat, 2018; Çuhadar, 2017; Dirilen-Gumus, 2017; Brummer, 2016), owned by the political leaders. However, there are a number of things to note, in which the existing articles still

focused on examining Hermann et al.'s three leadership style dimensions and operational code constructs, with samples also still more focused on political leaders in the Western Hemisphere.

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