

***INTERGENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP VALUE TRANSMISSION: A
SENSEMAKING STUDY OF CIPUTRA'S FOUNDER LEGACY***

**TRANSMISI NILAI KEPEMIMPINAN ANTARGENERASI: STUDI
PEMAHAMAN WARISAN PENDIRI CIPUTRA**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how successors within the Ciputra Group reinterpret and sustain the entrepreneurial leadership values introduced by its late founder, Dr. Ir. Ciputra. Although the IPE values—Integrity, Professionalism, and Entrepreneurship—are formally institutionalized, their continuity depends on how successors translate these principles into lived practice across generational transition. Using a qualitative interpretive design informed by sensemaking theory, this research draws on unstructured interviews with four senior leaders who were directly mentored by Ciputra. The findings reveal three interconnected processes that shape value transmission: experiential exposure to founder practices, reflective interpretation that generates shared leadership meaning, and embodied enactment of values in daily decision-making. A key contribution is the identification of debt of gratitude as a relational–moral mechanism that deepens commitment and strengthens the internalization of founder values, extending existing succession and founder-legacy literature. The study offers a practice-based model of intergenerational leadership value transmission and highlights managerial implications for designing experiential learning, cultivating embodied leadership, and fostering relational climates that support continuity in family enterprises.

Keywords: Leadership, Ciputra, Family Business

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti bagaimana para penerus dalam Grup Ciputra menafsirkan kembali dan mempertahankan nilai-nilai kepemimpinan kewirausahaan yang diperkenalkan oleh mendiang pendirinya, Dr. Ir. Ciputra. Meskipun nilai-nilai IPE—Integritas, Profesionalisme, dan Kewirausahaan—secara formal diinstitutionalisasi, keberlanjutannya bergantung pada bagaimana para penerus menerjemahkan prinsip-prinsip ini ke dalam praktik nyata di sepanjang transisi generasi. Dengan menggunakan desain interpretatif kualitatif yang didasarkan pada teori pembuatan makna, penelitian ini menggunakan wawancara tidak terstruktur dengan empat pemimpin senior yang secara langsung dibimbing oleh Ciputra. Temuan mengungkapkan tiga proses yang saling terkait yang membentuk transmisi nilai: paparan pengalaman terhadap praktik pendiri, interpretasi reflektif yang menghasilkan makna kepemimpinan bersama, dan perwujudan nilai-nilai dalam pengambilan keputusan sehari-hari. Kontribusi utama adalah identifikasi hutang budi sebagai mekanisme relasional-moral yang memperdalam komitmen dan memperkuat internalisasi nilai-nilai pendiri, memperluas literatur suksesi dan warisan pendiri yang ada. Studi ini menawarkan model berbasis praktik tentang transmisi nilai kepemimpinan antar generasi dan menyoroti implikasi manajerial untuk merancang pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, menumbuhkan kepemimpinan yang terwujud, dan memupuk iklim relasional yang mendukung keberlanjutan dalam usaha keluarga.

Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan, Ciputra, Usaha Keluarga

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today find themselves navigating environments that are not only volatile but also marked by shifts in structure and rapid technological advances. Many industries are experiencing “a rising tide of

volatility, uncertainty, and business complexity” that unsettles markets and reshapes how firms compete (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Such conditions challenge not only strategic planning but also the interpretive processes through which leaders and organizational

members construct shared understandings of emerging situations. Prior studies highlights that in volatile contexts, leaders occupy a central role in facilitating sensemaking by framing events, clarifying ambiguity, and sustaining collective orientation (Maitlis et al., 2013; Weick, 1995). Leadership therefore involves more than directing action. It also entails enabling individuals to interpret challenges and align their behavior with organizational values.

These interpretive demands become especially salient in enterprises where the organization's purpose, culture, and identity remain closely tied to a founding figure. Founders may set the initial tone by introducing the moral commitments and cognitive frames that shape early organizational life (Jaskiewicz et al., 2015; Suddaby et al., 2010), but these foundations do not automatically carry forward. Whether such values continue to matter depends on how successors make sense of them and how they adjust or translate these principles as circumstances change. Earlier studies show that processes such as narrative reconstruction, identity work, and the everyday interpretive interactions within an organization influence how inherited traditions are reaffirmed, altered, or questioned over time (Maclean et al., 2014; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Without this ongoing work of interpreting and applying meaning, the founder's values risk surviving only as symbolic references rather than as practical guides for organizational action.

A practice-based perspective offers further clarity on how values take on meaning within organizations. Practices, understood as recurrent social and material activities, form the settings in which values are enacted, negotiated, and made intelligible (Feldman et al.,

2021; Nicolini et al., 2003). Integrity, professionalism, or entrepreneurial orientation are not sustained by statements alone; they acquire significance through the ways individuals perform them in daily routines and informal interactions. As recent work shows, such practices are not merely repetitive behaviors but dynamic accomplishments through which members continually reproduce and adjust shared understandings (Seidl et al., 2021). Leadership succession therefore involves a continuing process of meaning creation in which organizational members interpret inherited principles through the lens of their lived experience.

These interpretive dynamics reflect additional layers of complexity in Southeast Asian contexts. Cultural norms concerning gratitude, moral reciprocity, and spiritual grounding often shape expectations surrounding leadership and authority (Burton & Beckman, 2007; Carney & Gedajlovic, 2002). Despite the importance of these cultural elements, empirical investigations that examine how successors in the region sustain a founder's leadership identity remain limited. Much of the existing literature focuses on behavioral leadership models or performance outcomes, while the interpretive processes that connect values across generations remain underdeveloped.

The Ciputra Group provides a context through which these questions can be examined. Its founder, the late Dr. Ir. Ciputra, articulated Integrity, Professionalism, and Entrepreneurship (IPE) as foundational values intended to guide both organizational conduct and personal character. Although these values are formally embedded across the Group, their continued relevance depends on how successors interpret and

enact them in their own practices. Prior research has outlined the behavioral dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership within the organization (Saksono et al., 2025), yet it does not explore the interpretive processes through which successors reconstruct the meaning of IPE following the founder's passing.

However, existing research has not explained how successors reconstruct founder values through relational–moral mechanisms and experiential exposure within an iterative sensemaking process, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where gratitude and spiritual grounding shape leadership meaning. This study addresses that gap by investigating how senior leaders who were directly mentored by Ciputra make sense of and sustain the founder's leadership values. Adopting an interpretive qualitative approach informed by social constructivism, the research examines how meaning is negotiated across generations through relational experience, reflective practice, and daily enactment. The findings indicate that the endurance of IPE is not the result of doctrinal preservation. Instead, it emerges from an ongoing process in which successors reinterpret inherited principles in response to contemporary organizational and cultural realities.

By explicating this interpretive work, the study advances theoretical discussions on leadership succession, identity formation, and founder legacy. It also contributes to the broader literature on Southeast Asian organizational contexts by illuminating how moral and spiritual frameworks intersect with leadership practice. Ultimately, the study shows that sustaining a founder's values is not a matter of passive inheritance. It is an active and continuing process of meaning creation that enables an organization to remain anchored in its

origins while adapting to the demands of a changing environment.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual foundation for this study. Sensemaking explains the interpretive mechanisms through which successors reconstruct founder values. Espoused–enacted value theory clarifies how these interpretations become embedded in daily behavior and organizational culture. A practice-based view highlights the role of experiential exposure and role modeling in shaping value enactment. Relational–moral mechanisms such as gratitude and spirituality provide contextual depth specific to Southeast Asia, amplifying how values are interpreted and reinforced. Together, these perspectives offer an integrated lens for understanding intergenerational value continuity.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study aims to produce an in-depth understanding of how Ciputra's leadership practices are interpreted and enacted within the organization. This study adopts social constructivism as its core methodological stance. Under this paradigm, leadership is treated as a socially constructed reality, where meaning is formed through narratives, interactions, and day-to-day experiences of organizational members. Knowledge is co-created, making the inquiry focused on how informants interpret and give meaning to the leadership values introduced by Ciputra.

This study uses both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were obtained through interviews with informants, while secondary data were derived from relevant documentation. The interviews were conducted individually in an unstructured, conversational format. The respondents in this study were:

- a. AT as Independent Commissioner of Ciputra Group
- b. HH as Managing Director of Ciputra Group.
- c. SY as Senior Director of Ciputra Group.
- d. DB, as a member of the Executive Board of Ciputra Education.

The interview material was analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2023). The analysis proceeded in an iterative and non-linear manner, treating meaning as something constructed through the interaction between researcher and data. I began by reading the transcripts repeatedly to develop familiarity and to note initial interpretive ideas. Coding was conducted inductively, allowing meaning-based codes to emerge without reliance on predetermined categories.

As the coding developed, related codes were gradually brought together into preliminary thematic patterns. This stage involved comparing extracts, posing interpretive questions, and keeping analytic memos to clarify evolving insights. Theme construction focused on identifying latent meaning rather than merely summarizing content. Themes were refined through continual movement between the data, the codes, and the developing analysis to ensure conceptual clarity and coherence.

Reflexivity formed an essential part of the process. I remained attentive to how my own standpoint, assumptions, and theoretical commitments shaped the interpretive decisions throughout the analysis. Consistent with the assumptions of reflexive thematic analysis, no intercoder reliability procedures or codebook validation were used, as meaning-making was understood to be interpretive rather than mechanical.

Through this analytic process, a coherent structure of meaning began to take shape. These interpretive patterns were then refined into the themes presented in the findings section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Debt of Gratitude as a Relational Construction

Interview data show that successors interpret debt of gratitude not as a hierarchical obligation but as a moral relationship built through trust, care, and long-term interaction with Ir. Ciputra. Their relationship with him is understood not merely as a formal superior–subordinate dynamic, but as a bond that grows from shared experiences and sustained interpersonal commitment. Over time, gratitude evolves into a sense of loyalty and moral responsibility.

I have been in Ciputra for 36 years. I feel at home because there are many opportunities to grow, and because the values are upheld together. I feel I have a moral responsibility for the trust that was given.” (SY)

For me personally, I feel a debt of gratitude toward Pak Ci. He was not only a leader, but a life teacher for me. Many things I learned from the way he saw people, the way he thought, and the way he built. All of that was contagious and shaped the way I work until today. (AT)

We do not work only because of money, but because of the trust that was given. Our responsibility is to return that trust with the best results. (DB)

Pak Ci always taught that a promise is a debt. If you have been given trust, you must deliver. That is part of integrity. (HH)

These accounts suggest that gratitude is not merely an emotion but develops into a relational meaning

system. It is shaped through ongoing interactions, moments of mentoring, opportunities for growth, and informal conversations that foster mutual care and responsibility. This pattern aligns with Algoe's (2012) find-remind-and-bind theory, which conceptualizes gratitude as a mechanism that strengthens relational bonds by highlighting the benefactor's responsiveness and encouraging long-term affiliative commitment.

The successors descriptions also show that this gratitude operates as moral reciprocity, rather than subordination. Their narratives resonate with Dutton and Heaphy's (2003) notion of high-quality connections, in which emotional carrying capacity, mutual regard, and a sense of vitality enable individuals to feel valued and motivated to uphold shared expectations. This dynamic further reflects Fiske's (1992) communal sharing model, where loyalty, unity, and non-contractual obligations arise from shared identity and relational closeness, producing moral duties that extend beyond transactional exchange.

Within the Ciputra Group, debt of gratitude emerges as a relational language that connects members across generations. It reinforces a collective identity and often described by successors as the "Ciputra big family" that embeds moral expectations regarding integrity, responsibility, and commitment. Ciputra's own reflection in *The Passion of My Life* affirms this construction of meaning:

We are very indebted to them. May God bless all the people who have so faithfully walked with me. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 245)

Taken together, these insights show that debt of gratitude is experienced not as a burden but as a

moral acknowledgment of trust. It represents a form of social indebtedness rooted in shared work and role modeling, continually renewed through mutual respect among organizational members. This relational construction strengthens cultural cohesion within the organization and supports the long-term continuity of the founder's values.

Knowledge Through Reflection and Experience

Within the Ciputra Group, knowledge is not only viewed as a set of abstract theories or formalized procedures, but as something learned through direct involvement in work, observation, trial and error, and continuous reflection. Successors describe learning as a process that unfolds through doing, watching, asking questions, and thinking through both successes and mistakes. This resonates with constructivist perspectives that knowledge is created through meaning-making, where individuals interpret their experiences in interaction with others and with themselves (Cunliffe, 2002).

Pak Ci did not like theory. He preferred to try something; if it failed, he improved it and tried again. That is how we all learned. (HH)

He learned more from action than from concepts. Every mistake became a space to think and to improve himself. (AT)

Pak Ci often thought about his projects day and night, gathering information from many sources. From that, I learned that real knowledge comes from persistence and experience. (SY)

These accounts illustrate that learning is constructed collectively through shared work and exposure.

Successors often learned by being invited into meetings, observing how decisions were made, and watching how Ciputra navigated problems. Rather than receiving formal instruction, they developed understanding by interpreting his actions, reflecting on interactions, and discussing ideas with him and with one another.

This pattern aligns with Sandberg and Tsoukas's (2020) argument that understanding emerges through sensemaking and the ongoing reinterpretation of practice. Learning occurs as individuals return to their experiences, reconsider what they observed, and draw meaning that informs future action. Ciputra's own reflection in his autobiography supports this construction:

I reflected on what we had achieved... Nothing is more joyful than realizing that the energy and motivation from me have created progress in the people I lead. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 200)

For Ciputra, knowledge arises from repeatedly revisiting experience and interpreting it. Within a constructivist framework, this shows that "becoming a leader" is shaped not by leadership theories but by meaning-making through interaction, exposure, action, and shared reflection. Knowledge becomes a social accomplishment co-created through engagement with others, grounded in practice, and refined through sustained reflection on lived experience.

IPE Values as a Shared Meaning System

Successors describe Integrity, Professionalism, and Entrepreneurship (IPE) as a moral system that animates

organizational life, rather than just a set of corporate slogans. The three values are understood collectively as the foundation that shapes how people think, act, and relate to one another within the Ciputra Group.

IPE is not decoration on a wall. It is a value we live every day. (AT)

Integrity is the soul of professionalism. Without integrity, professionalism means nothing. (SY)
Pak Ci always emphasized that if you want to succeed, you cannot just be smart — you must have integrity and professionalism. That is what makes people trust us. (HH)

Whenever we are faced with difficult decisions, we return to IPE. It becomes a moral compass in the organization. (DB)

Across interviews, IPE is constructed as a collective moral language through which members interpret their work, relationships, and responsibilities. Values become shared meaning systems when they are enacted, discussed, and reinterpreted through social interaction across generations. This aligns with Ravasi and Schultz's (2006) argument that organizational identity develops through the ongoing interpretation of shared values among members.

The data show that successors do not treat IPE as a fixed doctrine. Instead, they describe it as a living value that is continuously shaped through practical experience, reflection, and interaction with others. Ciputra's reflection in *The Passion of My Life* shows the same construction:

Never lose the values of goodness in doing business. Always remember three things: integrity, professionalism, and

entrepreneurship. There is no stopping in staying alert to our commitment to work hard even when our projects succeed everywhere. (Ciputra, 2017, p. 197)

This interpretive pattern is further supported by the sensemaking perspective, which emphasizes that meaning is constructed through shared narratives and collective interpretation, particularly in moments of ambiguity or difficult decision-making (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). For successors, IPE functions not merely as behavioral guidance but as a living philosophy that shapes how they understand their roles, make judgments, and navigate complex organizational realities.

Thus, IPE becomes a shared meaning system that binds the organization morally and emotionally, sustaining alignment between personal integrity, professional conduct, and entrepreneurial spirit across generations.

Role Model (Walk the Talk) as a Social Leadership Practice

Interview data show that role modeling is a central mechanism through which successors understand and internalize the leadership demonstrated by Ir. Ciputra. They describe leadership not primarily as positional authority, but as an example made visible through action. Across narratives, the founder's direct presence in operational work served as the anchor through which values such as discipline, responsibility, and humility were learned.

The most effective way is to give an example. We work together, push together, take part in the struggle. That is 'walk the talk'. (SY)
Pak Ciputra taught us through action. I once saw him showing how

to mop the floor in Dufan. That was how he showed responsibility. (DB)
He did not just talk, he went down to the field. From the way he treated subordinates, we learned the meaning of humane leadership. (AT)
He was present in every important project, checking the details himself. From that we learned the importance of discipline and example. (HH)

Ciputra's own reflection reinforces this interpretation. In his autobiography he said:

Today, when I reflect on what we have achieved, sometimes I cannot believe it. I remember... the young people who worked with me. Their willingness to learn and absorb motivation from me created extraordinary development. Nothing is more joyful than realizing that my energy and motivation have created progress in the people I lead. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 198)

From a constructivist standpoint, these accounts indicate that role modeling is not simply a leadership style but a social process in which meaning is created through observable action. Successors learned by being physically present with the founder, working alongside him, observing how he handled situations, and making sense of these experiences together. This pattern aligns with practice-based scholarship, which argues that values are acquired through situated activity rather than verbal instruction (Gherardi, 2009).

The findings also resonate with the leadership as practice perspective, which emphasizes that leadership emerges from collective engagement and material-discursive interactions rather than individual traits alone. The

founder's behavior thus becomes a shared reference point for interpreting integrity, professionalism, and expectations for quality.

Ladkin's (2010) concept of embodied moments clarifies the mechanism at work: followers grasp the meaning of leadership through concrete physical cues, gestures, presence, and action that communicate moral and relational intent. Acts such as mopping the floor or picking up trash become formative experiences that encode ethical significance.

This is further supported by ethical leadership research. Brown and Treviño (2006) argue that followers learn ethics through vicarious observation of leaders who visibly "practice what they preach." The successors' accounts mirror this dynamic: values were transmitted not through directives, but through consistent and observable enactment.

Overall, role modeling in the Ciputra Group operates as a cross-generational social mechanism. Through co-presence, shared activity, and embodied action, the founder's behavior functions as nonverbal moral communication that stabilizes cultural meaning and shapes successors' leadership identity. In this context, leadership is learned through practice, allowing organizational values to endure long after the founder's lifetime.

Adapting Values to Changing Times

Interview data show that successors view IPE not as fixed commandments but as living principles that must be continually reinterpreted to remain relevant. They emphasize that the moral essence of IPE remains stable, yet its expression must evolve alongside shifting generational expectations, technological developments, and new work cultures.

The values are the same, but the style is different. In the past, Pak Ci was strict; now it is more dialogic and relaxed. (SY)

The third generation brings a new spirit. They are more digital and faster, but still hold firmly to integrity. (DB)

Pak Ci allowed his children to think in their own way. He said every era has its own challenges and its own answers. (HH)

Adaptation is important. If we don't adjust to the thinking of young people, we will lose them. But the core values remain IPE. (AT)

These accounts indicate that continuity of values is maintained through intergenerational negotiation of meaning. Adaptation is not understood as deviation from the founder's intent but as the process through which inherited values are recontextualized in new environments. This interpretation aligns with the view that organizational identity evolves through the ongoing reinterpretation of shared values as new members contribute different experiences and expectations (Gioia et al., 2013). Ciputra's own reflection echoes this understanding:

I highly respect the knowledge and vision of my children and grandchildren according to their education and their era. But the values I have nurtured remain absolute: entrepreneurship, integrity, and professionalism. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 247–248)

This pattern is also consistent with the paradox perspective, which argues that organizations must balance value stability with contextual flexibility. Core identity needs to remain intact, yet

practices must adjust to evolving cultural and generational demands (Smith & Lewis, 2011). In the Ciputra Group, successors do not merely inherit IPE; they actively reinterpret its meaning so that it remains relevant amid changing expectations and challenges.

These reinterpetive efforts reflect what family-business scholars describe as identity work, where successors rearticulate founder values to maintain legitimacy while asserting their own generational relevance (Knapp et al., 2013). Such adaptation often involves unspoken tensions, which Jaskiewicz and Dyer Jr. (2017) identify as “the elephant in the room,” as family members navigate the implicit expectation to honor the founder’s legacy while simultaneously modernizing leadership practices and organizational norms.

Through this ongoing cycle of interpretation and adaptation, IPE functions as a durable moral anchor while allowing leadership styles, organizational practices, and cultural expressions to evolve. This enables the Ciputra Group to maintain strategic relevance without compromising its foundational moral direction.

Spirituality as the Foundation of Values and Moral Responsibility

Interview data indicate that the successors understand spirituality as the deepest source of Ir. Ciputra’s leadership identity. Rather than functioning as a private belief, spirituality appears as a shared moral grounding that influences how people think, make decisions, and interact with one another. Through this shared orientation, values such as integrity, humility, and responsibility acquire meaning in everyday organizational life..

Integrity cannot stand alone without faith. Pak Ci always said, we work for God, not only for the company.
(Antonius Tanan)

The integrity values taught are rooted in spiritual awareness. That is what makes this culture strong.
(Prof. Denny)

Pak Ci believed that if we are honest and work hard, God will help. That became a shared belief in the organization. (Totok Sutoto)

Pak Ci often said that success is not because we are smart, but because God still trusts us to be trustworthy.
(Harun Hajadi)

Across these accounts, spirituality is not described in abstract theological terms. It surfaces in small but repeated moments—brief reminders during meetings, reflections shared in informal conversations, and the moral tone embedded in Ciputra’s daily conduct. Such lived expressions, rather than doctrinal instruction, allow spirituality to become a collective and socially reinforced reality. Successors learn spiritual meaning not only from what Ciputra said but from how he behaved and the atmosphere he consistently cultivated around work, gratitude, and responsibility.

This interpretation aligns with Fry’s (2003) argument that spiritual leadership generates shared meaning, a sense of calling, and moral membership that binds individuals to a common purpose. Studies of workplace spirituality similarly show that shared spiritual values can deepen prosocial behavior, strengthen moral identity, and create a sense of responsibility toward others (Rego et al., 2008; Kolodinsky et al., 2008). Pawar (2009) adds that spirituality becomes influential only when enacted through daily interactions, which mirrors how the successors

describe their experience of learning from Ciputra. Ciputra's personal reflections reinforce this shared construction of meaning:

Until today, I am still amazed by the miracles... I can find no explanation except that it is God's power. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 310)

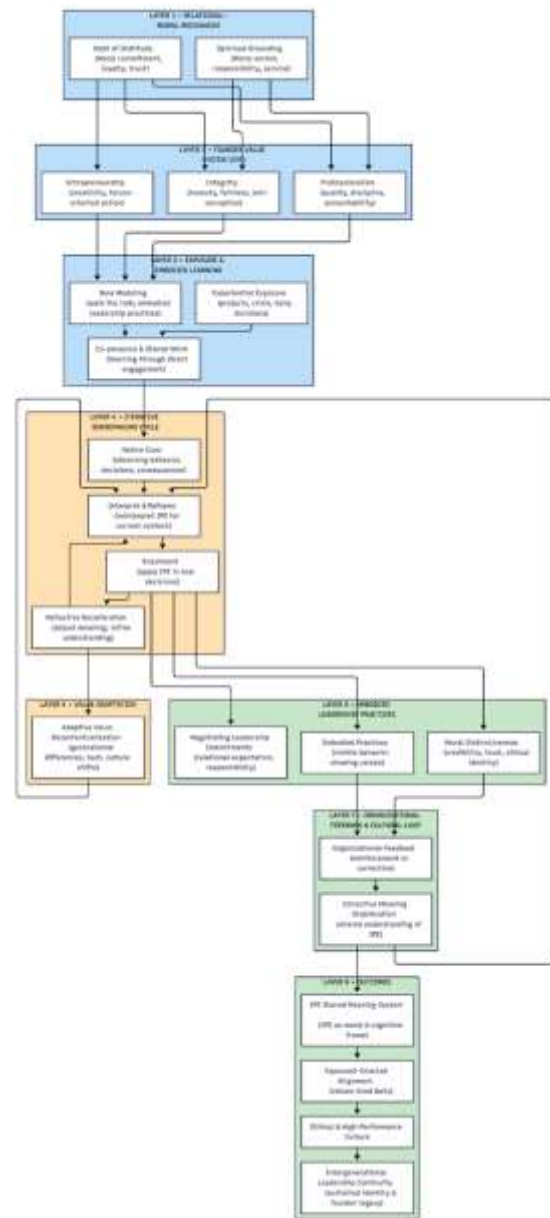
All of this has taught me the power of faith... God's involvement in my life has been extraordinary. (Ciputra, quoted in Endah, 2019, p. 312)

Taken together, these narratives show that spirituality functions as the moral foundation that shapes behavior, strengthens character, and frames work as an expression of service and gratitude. From a constructivist perspective, spirituality becomes a shared interpretive system, sustained through role modeling, collective work experiences, and everyday communication. It provides a moral compass through which successors interpret the meaning of leadership and assess their responsibilities within the organization.

By grounding IPE in a shared spiritual frame, successors maintain a coherent moral orientation amid changing generational expectations and evolving organizational practices. Spirituality therefore not only shapes individual conduct but also reinforces the broader continuity of the founder's leadership legacy, anchoring IPE values across time and enabling successors to carry them forward with conviction and purpose.

Synthesis of the Finding

Figure 1. Intergenerational Leadership Value Continuity Process in the Ciputra



Group

This model depicts how successors interpret, enact, and sustain the founder's IPE values through an iterative, practice-based developmental cycle shaped by relational–moral mechanisms, experiential exposure, sensemaking, value adaptation, and organizational feedback.

The model should be read from top to bottom as a sequential yet iterative

flow. The upper layers represent the relational–moral and experiential foundations that shape early value interpretation, followed by the core sensemaking cycle where values are reinterpreted and enacted. The lower layers illustrate organizational reinforcement and long-term outcomes. This structure highlights that value continuity emerges through repeated cycles of noticing, interpreting, enacting, and recalibrating meaning.

Each of the themes contributes directly to the construction of the process model. Gratitude and spirituality inform Layer 1 as relational–moral mechanisms. IPE as a shared meaning system forms Layer 2. Role modeling and experiential exposure correspond to Layer 3. Reflection and interpretive work form the basis of the iterative sensemaking cycle in Layer 4. Adaptation to changing times is represented in Layer 5. These thematic insights were then synthesized into the subsequent layers of leadership enactment, organizational reinforcement, and long-term continuity.

The findings integrate into a multi-layered process that explains how successors sustain and reinterpret the founder's IPE values across generations. The inputs, comprising relational and moral mechanisms such as debt of gratitude and spiritual grounding, the formal IPE value system, and experiential learning through role modeling and shared work, provide the foundational moral, cognitive, and behavioral cues through which successors begin constructing meaning. These inputs anchor how leadership is perceived and establish the interpretive conditions that guide how values are understood in practice.

At the center of the model lies a core sensemaking cycle, where successors notice behavioral and situational cues, interpret and reframe

the meaning of IPE for contemporary contexts, enact these interpretations in real decisions, and recalibrate their understanding through reflection. This iterative movement explains how values are continually translated, adjusted, and embodied rather than merely inherited. Complementing this cycle, value adaptation and embodied leadership practices demonstrate how successors negotiate generational differences, express credibility through visible behavior, and articulate the founder's moral intent in ways that remain relevant to changing organizational realities.

The outputs of this process emerge at the organizational level, where repeated enactment produces feedback loops that reinforce or correct behavior, gradually stabilizing collective meaning. Over time, this consolidation strengthens cultural coherence, aligns espoused and enacted values, and contributes to an ethical and high performance environment. Ultimately, these outputs enable intergenerational leadership continuity, ensuring that the founder's identity, principles, and moral philosophy remain embedded within everyday organizational life.

Taken together, these dynamics form a unified process model in which relational foundations, interpretive mechanisms, and organizational reinforcement interact to sustain the founder's leadership legacy. Figure 1 illustrates how these components unfold across eight interconnected layers, capturing the iterative and practice based nature of value continuity within the Ciputra Group.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a process-oriented account of how founder values are interpreted, reshaped, and maintained across generations. The findings show that value continuity does

not occur through passive transfer. Instead, it develops through three connected processes: learning from direct experience with the founder, interpreting and reframing inherited principles through ongoing sensemaking, and expressing those principles in daily leadership behavior in ways that reaffirm moral credibility. Through this explanation, the study broadens succession scholarship by showing that moral and relational forces, especially a sense of gratitude and a spiritual orientation, play an important role in how leaders internalize values within Southeast Asian family enterprises. These insights refine existing founder-legacy theory and clarify how stated values become lived practices that are strengthened by organizational routines.

A key theoretical insight from the research is the role of gratitude as a relational and moral force that deepens the internalization of founder values. Instead of functioning as a form of hierarchical duty, gratitude acts as a shared moral reference that fosters commitment, shapes leadership behavior, and encourages successors to remain aligned with the ethical example set by the founder. This offers an important addition to leadership and succession studies by illustrating how the relational norms of Southeast Asian contexts help sustain leadership identity in ways that differ from the largely individualistic orientations emphasized in Western research.

The findings also carry several practical implications. Organizations that aim to preserve founder values should focus on learning environments that allow direct engagement with real work, such as mentoring arrangements, project assignments, field immersion, and reflective discussions, rather than depending solely on formal training

programs. Leadership development should prioritize learning through action because consistent behavior remains the most effective medium for passing values on to others. Beyond this, organizations need to cultivate relational conditions grounded in trust, respect, and mutual responsibility, as these conditions naturally encourage mechanisms similar to the gratitude-based commitment observed in the study. As new technologies and cultural expectations emerge with each generational shift, sustaining value continuity calls for deliberate opportunities to reinterpret and reposition core values so that they remain meaningful while still adaptable to contemporary demands.

Taken together, the study shows that maintaining founder values is a continuous and socially constructed process. Long-term leadership continuity depends on how well relational depth, reflective interpretation, and adaptive enactment are woven into organizational life, allowing the organization to stay rooted in its origins while remaining capable of responding to change.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

This study makes three theoretical contributions.

First, it enriches sensemaking scholarship by showing that the reconstruction of founder values is not just a cognitive task. Successors interpret values through an ongoing cycle shaped by real experiences with the founder, reflection on those experiences, and the way they later enact those interpretations in daily leadership. In this process, debt of gratitude and spiritual grounding operate as moral filters that guide how meaning is formed an aspect rarely highlighted in prior literature.

Second, the findings extend practice-based perspectives on leadership and culture. Rather than viewing value continuity as the result of formal systems, this study shows that alignment between what an organization claims and what it practices grows out of lived routines—working together, observing senior leaders, and learning through shared action. These micro-level practices help explain how values survive generational transitions.

Third, the research contributes to founder-legacy and family-business studies by identifying debt of gratitude as a relational force that strengthens continuity. It reveals a pathway where values are carried forward through moral reciprocity and long-standing relationships, offering an alternative to the more individual-driven interpretations often emphasized in Western contexts.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer several practical insights for organizations managing leadership transitions. Experiential learning should be central in leadership development through direct project involvement, shadowing senior leaders, and field immersion. Consistent and visible behavior from top leaders remains crucial because people internalize values more from what they observe than from formal statements.

Organizations also need to cultivate relationships rooted in trust, respect, and mutual responsibility, as these conditions naturally encourage moral commitment and long-term ownership. As technology and work cultures evolve, companies should create structured spaces where younger leaders can reinterpret core values so the values remain relevant and applicable across changing contexts.

LIMITATIONS

This study has two main limitations. First, the data were drawn exclusively from leaders within Ciputra Group's Sub-holding 2, which limits the breadth of organizational perspectives captured. Other business units may experience different relational dynamics, exposure patterns, or sensemaking processes depending on their operational context and leadership structures.

Second, the qualitative design focused on unstructured interviews, privileges interpretive depth but does not allow for broad generalization across the wider corporate ecosystem.

These limitations suggest that the findings represent a contextually rich but partial picture of intergenerational leadership continuity within the broader Ciputra Group.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could use longitudinal approaches to observe how interpretations of founder values evolve as successors take on broader roles. Comparative studies across business units or across different family enterprises may uncover variations in the operation of relational and moral mechanisms. Researchers may also use mixed methods to examine the influence of experiential exposure, role modeling, and moral reciprocity on value enactment. Further studies could explore how digital transformation, governance models, or HR systems interact with interpretive processes to either strengthen or weaken continuity of values.

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