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Chinese Leadership

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Chinese Leadership

Summary

Leadership is universally acknowledged as a pivotal subject within both academic discourse and practice. Numerous well-established leadership theories have emerged through research conducted in Western cultures, giving rise to valid inquiries into their relevance in diverse cultural contexts. Given China's rapid economic growth and pivotal position in the world, it is important for organizations to explore indigenous leadership theories that prove effective in the Chinese context. Chinese indigenous leadership contains unique elements that are deeply rooted in the rich Chinese cultural heritage and intricate internal and external management environments. Specifically, Chinese philosophies place a significant emphasis on prioritizing interpersonal ethics as the cornerstone of behaviors and advocate viewing and understanding the world through a holistic and dynamic standpoint. Building upon this foundation, this article presents a theoretical framework for Chinese indigenous leadership theories that are centered on ethics and morality (including CPM leadership theory, transformational leadership in the Chinese context, paternalistic leadership, fraternalistic leadership, ethical leadership, and Tao-oriented leadership) and characterized by a holistic dynamic balance perspective (including differential leadership, paradoxical leadership, dialectical leadership, crisis leadership, and vigilant leadership). Furthermore, an extensive review and analysis of the origins, definitions, dimensions, existing research findings, and future research prospects of established Chinese indigenous leadership theories are conducted. These theories hold the potential to provide an alternative approach to addressing issues related to unethical nature, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) matters, and the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) environment. In order to advance our understanding of leadership dynamics, future

research could adopt multimethod approaches, employ interdisciplinary perspectives, and foster cross-national collaborations. Such collective efforts are expected to further enrich this fascinating field.

Keywords:

Indigenous Chinese leadership; Chinese context; Cultural background; Challenges; Trend

1 Contextualizing Leadership: Unveiling Chinese Indigenous Theories in a Global Landscape

Leadership, defined as the process of intentionally influencing others to shape behaviors and relationships within a group or organization (Yukl, 2013), is widely recognized as a key topic in both academia and practice (Steers et al., 1996). According to the contingency perspective in organizational behavior (Johns, 2006) and contingency leadership theoretical perspectives (Peters et al., 1985; Schriesheim et al., 1994), leadership effectiveness is contingent upon situational factors, including cultural contexts (Yukl, 2013). Notably, many established leadership theories have been developed based on research conducted in Western cultures, prompting legitimate questions regarding their applicability within other cultural contexts (Avolio et al., 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the contextualization of specific leadership types across diverse cultural environments, as well as the leadership styles that emerge from particular cultural contexts (Takeuchi et al., 2020).

In the early 21st century, China's rapid economic growth and its pivotal global position have attracted numerous global corporations. To navigate this landscape successfully, these organizations should strive to gain a deeper understanding of unique leadership styles that prove effective in Chinese

contexts, making it imperative to delve into Chinese indigenous theories.

This chapter aims to review Chinese indigenous leadership theories including theories that originated in Western contexts and were subsequently adapted for relevance in the Chinese context, as well as theories that developed based on Chinese culture and philosophic thinking, and provides direction for the further development, contributing valuable insights for both academia and practical applications. To achieve this goal, our approach unfolds in the following steps. First, it outlines the trajectory of leadership theories and explores the implications of Chinese culture in driving the advancement of indigenous leadership theories. Building upon this knowledge, a theoretical framework is constructed and the role of Chinese leadership in addressing global challenges is discussed. Second, Chinese indigenous leadership theories are reviewed and categorized, aligning them with the established theoretical framework. This includes perspectives that emphasize the role of ethics and moral characteristics in shaping leadership (e.g., CPM theory, transformational leadership) and those that adopt a holistic dynamic balance perspective in understanding leadership (e.g., paradoxical leadership, crisis leadership). The coverage includes: (1) the originality and the development of the ideas, (2) the description and evaluation of the concepts, and (3) future directions. Finally, this chapter charts new directions for future research in the field of Chinese leadership.

2 Leadership and Chinese Culture

2.1 The Development of Leadership Theories

Leadership has been a prominent academic topic since the 1890s. Scholars have examined various facets of leadership, including the development, dynamics, and nomological networks of different types of leadership. A significant body of literature has identified different stages of various leadership approaches (e.g., Yukl, 2013; Zhu et al., 2019), such as the trait approach (from the 1920s),

the behavior approach (from the 1950s), the power approach (from the 1950s), the contingency approach (from the 1960s), and new approaches (e.g., relationship-based approach, follower-centered approach, value-based leadership, and multi-level approach). Zhu et al. (2019) visualized the time-zone keywords of leadership research. Remarkably, the spotlight has shifted from hero-like leadership to a paradigm that prioritizes unilateral social influence (e.g., on followers, on organizations), and subsequently to multilateral social influence (Zhu et al., 2019).

With the need to consider how the multifaceted needs of various stakeholders can be considered, a line of study on paradoxical leadership has recently gained attention, which has also triggered reflections on leadership research from both Western and Eastern philosophical perspectives (Zhang et al., 2015). A prime illustration of this exploration is the prominent role of yin and yang—a symbolic facet of Chinese philosophy—which introduces a fresh and distinctive perspective on the development of leadership theories (Zhang et al., 2015). It is therefore significant and interesting to consider the Chinese cultural roots and philosophy in the development of leadership theories.

2.2 Chinese Culture and Leadership Theories

2.2.1 Similarities between Views of Leadership in Chinese Philosophy and Modern Leadership Theories

Chinese philosophical wisdom contributes to ideas of leadership effectiveness. Ancient Chinese society had views on what constitutes the best leaders. For example, in Taoist philosophy, the leader of a country needs to “manage the country like cooking a pot of small seafood such as fishes and shrimps”—that is, without stirring or taking any action. Additionally, Confucianism recommends that, regarding the task functioning and the art of balancing various stakeholders’ interests, the most prominent part is to respect the power of ordinary people since “water could support boats but also

could fail boats.” The ideas of various types of Chinese philosophy correspond well with existing leadership theories, such as Taoism with laissez-faire leadership, legalism with transactional leadership, and Confucianism with benevolent leadership. Research by Ma and Tusi (2015) illustrates the similarities between views on leadership in Chinese philosophies and Western leadership theories.

2.2.2 The Unique Aspects of Chinese Philosophies

In addition to the points mentioned, Chinese philosophy also encompasses distinctive perspectives, notably placing a longstanding emphasis on interpersonal ethics and emphasizing morality and ethics as foundational principles in both individual life and society (*yideweiben* 以德为本). For instance, Confucianism particularly highlights the importance of individual ethics and virtues. Further, *junzi* emphasizes individual clear conscience and righteousness, usually with strong internal principles. Without *nei sheng wai wang* (inner peace and inner high moral ethical standards), a leader cannot convincingly claim to be qualified. This tradition underscores the significance of leaders cultivating their own ethical standing and righteousness before assuming leadership roles. Therefore, indigenous leadership theories and the adaptation and generalization of Western leadership theories in the Chinese context should regard ethical elements as a basis. For example, Ling et al. (1987) proposed the CPM theory, based on the PM theory (see Section 3.1), indicating the unique dimensions of character and morals, and leaders’ moral element is the foundation for their two other function-related leadership behaviors. Moreover, Li and Shi’s (2005) research into transformational leadership in the Chinese context also incorporates ethical moral modeling as one important dimension. All these studies suggest that ethics serves as the basis and cornerstone of leadership within the Chinese context.

Furthermore, the other distinctive characteristic of Chinese values is their holistic and dynamic understanding of the world, drawing inspiration from the principles of yin–yang philosophy. This approach acknowledges that, even though certain paradoxical dualities may initially seem contradictory and distinct, they are fundamentally interrelated and complementary in nature (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Much like the yin and yang symbol, which represents the interplay of opposing forces that ultimately create harmony, the leadership theories that align with the perspective encourage leaders to skillfully navigate and transform conflicts arising from seemingly conflicting contradictions to find a dynamic balance, instead of seeking to eliminate one side of the duality in favor of the other. Paradoxical leadership and dialectical leadership serve as good examples that embody this perspective. They emphasize the importance of managing and integrating seemingly opposing needs among employees and within organizations, fostering a balanced and adaptive leadership style at both the micro and macro levels (Wang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2019).

Chinese philosophies emphasize the role of ethics and morality and focus on holistically addressing paradoxes in a dynamic, balanced way. Based on these foundations, the following framework is constructed, aiming to provide insights for future research (see Figure 1) that is centered on ethics and morality and characterized by a holistic dynamic balance perspective.

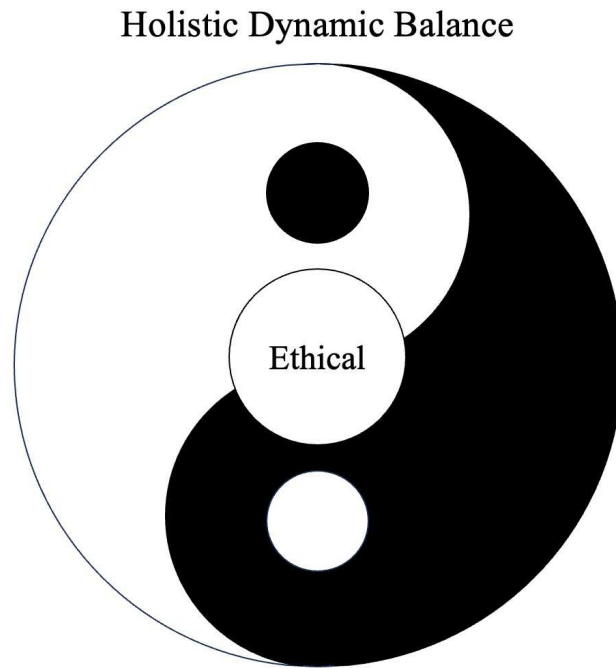


Figure 1. The perspectives of Chinese indigenous leadership theories

In the following section, which specifically introduces Chinese indigenous leadership theories, detailed exploration will be undertaken regarding the implications of Chinese culture and philosophies on the development of leadership theories.

2.3 Chinese Leadership Theories and Global Challenges

Chinese culture has played a pivotal role in nurturing the development of Chinese indigenous leadership theories. Remarkably, while rooted in Chinese culture, these theories possess a universal relevance that extends to addressing global challenges, ranging from unethical nature to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) issues, as well as the complexity of the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) environment. The theoretical framework described in the previous section also aligns harmoniously with the solutions for addressing these multifaceted challenges.

2.3.1 Unethical Nature

The radical evil of human nature and numerous scandals that have exposed ethical lapses among high-level leaders and organizational decisions have thrust moral and ethical considerations in the workplace to the forefront of academia and practice. Given the influential role that leaders play within these contexts, an increasing number of scholars have directed their attention toward exploring leaders' moral attributes, their capacity to guide employees toward ethical conduct, and their role in cultivating an ethical climate within organizations (Den Hartog, 2015). In this context, the emphasis of ethics and morality placed on Chinese philosophies and related Chinese indigenous leadership theories rooted in this perspective—such as the CPM theory, which underscores the significance of leaders' moral characteristics, and Chinese ethical leadership theory, which focuses on leaders' moral qualities and their capacity to influence employees' ethical conduct and foster an ethical climate—are in harmony with the predominant research focus.

2.3.2 DEI Issues and the VUCA Environment

Against the background of the Civil Rights Movement's pursuit of equity, the influence of globalization, and shifting demographics fostering diversity and aspirations for inclusion, issues of DEI have gained remarkable attention across diverse domains, including in the workplace (Roberts & Grayson, 2021). Achieving a harmonious balance amid these multifaceted dynamics remains a challenge and a vital pursuit of effective leadership (Mallick, 2020). However, it is noteworthy that, from the perspectives of theoretical argumentation, several Chinese indigenous leadership theories rooted in the principles of yin–yang and adopting the holistic dynamic balance perspective hold the potential to provide alternative solutions to these challenges. One such example is paradoxical leadership, which is characterized by effectively managing contradictory tensions and opposing

demands within an organization and helps effectively balance the tension between promoting individual differences and building a cohesive, inclusive environment. It values followers' diverse opinions, allows for the satisfaction of diverse needs while seeking common ground, and balances the pursuit of equity with acknowledging the unique strengths of each follower (Batool et al., 2023). Thus, paradoxical leadership emerges as an alternative option that enables organizations to embrace the challenges of DEI, fostering an environment where diverse voices are valued, equity is promoted, and inclusion is genuinely practiced.

Beyond the challenges that organizations face internally, external factors have also brought unprecedented complexity and uncertainty to organizations. These external challenges include the ongoing global spread of COVID-19 since 2020, as well as rapid advancements in high-tech innovations like 5G technology, big data, and artificial intelligence. This environment, characterized by VUCA, has exerted a substantial influence on the growth of organizations, potentially even impacting their survival. In this context, a range of indigenous Chinese leadership theories come into focus that adopt the holistic dynamic perspective in addressing current crises and seeking development opportunities, such as crisis leadership and vigilant leadership. These leaders see “crisis” and “opportunity” as interconnected rather than separate entities. They can lead people in crisis to find direction, overcome difficulties, and make constructive changes, thereby turning “crisis” into “opportunity.” Theoretically, therefore, relevant Chinese leadership theories adopting such a holistic and dynamic balanced perspective offer an alternative approach for addressing these challenges effectively from both inside and outside the organizations. And more relevant empirical evidence is needed in the future to support these theoretical arguments effectively.

An overview of indigenous leadership theories and corresponding challenges is presented in Figure

2.

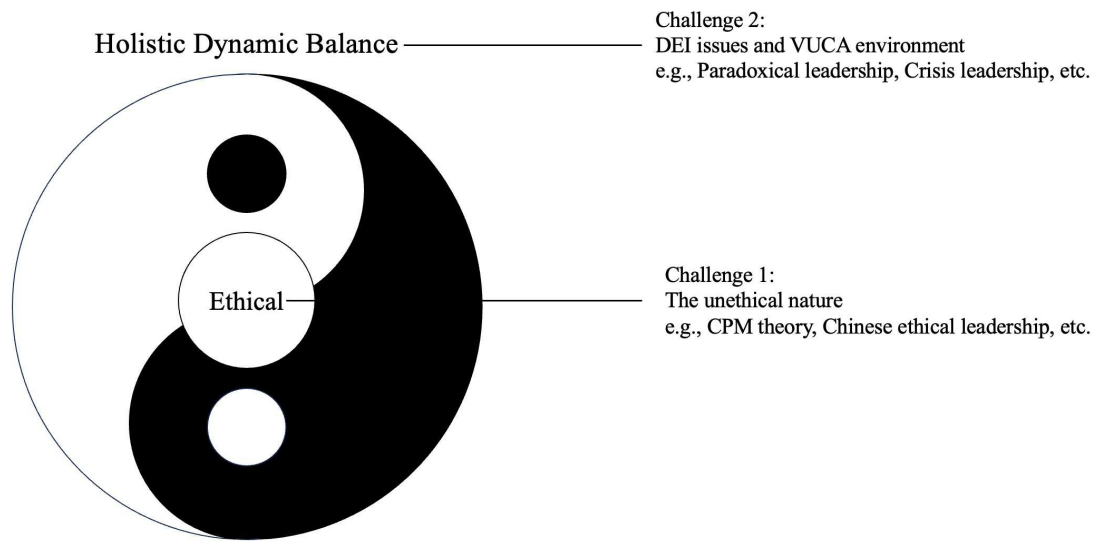


Figure 2. Chinese leadership theories and challenges

3 Chinese Indigenous Leadership Theories

In alignment with the outlined theoretical framework, this section examined and categorizes Chinese indigenous leadership theories from two perspectives: the role of ethics and moral characteristics, and the holistic dynamic balance perspective in shaping leadership. This comprehensive framework, spanning personal attributes and dynamics influences, sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of the landscape of Chinese leadership theories.

3.1 *Ethics and Leadership*

Here, a review and synthesis of indigenous theories that focus on the role of ethics and moral in shaping leadership is undertaken. This emphasis is consistent with the core principles highlighted in Chinese culture and philosophy.

3.1.1 CPM Leadership Theory

Origin, Definition, and Dimensions

The CPM leadership theory, developed by Ling et al. (1987), builds upon the PM theory of leadership proposed by Misumi and Peterson (1985). The PM theory suggests that leaders can be classified into two distinct types based on their behavior: performance-oriented leaders and maintenance-oriented leaders. Performance-oriented leaders (the P dimension) prioritize achieving success, while maintenance-oriented leaders (the M dimension) prioritize relationship management (Misumi & Peterson, 1985). However, it is noteworthy that Chinese culture, such as Confucianism, places considerable importance on “virtue” as a leadership character, but “virtue” has not been incorporated in PM theory.

Recognizing this gap, Ling et al. (1987) introduced a third factor, C (character and morals), into the theory to address the importance of character and moral attributes within the Chinese context. By integrating the C dimension, the CPM theory provides a nuanced understanding of leadership that considers not only the common focus on performance and maintenance among leaders across various cultures but also the character and moral attributes that are valued highly in Chinese culture. It serves as a contextualized extension of the PM theory, providing a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive perspective on leadership in the Chinese context.

Findings from Past Research

The existing body of research suggests that CPM leadership behaviors have significant effects on several important outcomes. For instance, Li et al. (2012) found that CPM leadership behaviors are associated with enhanced subordinates’ altruistic behaviors and increased work engagement. Ling and Wang (2014) discovered that CPM leadership can effectively reduce subordinates’

counterproductive behaviors. Additionally, Li (2015) demonstrated the role of CPM leadership in improving organizational harmony. Table 1 summarizes relevant research on the impact of CPM leadership in the Chinese literature.

Future Research Prospects

CPM leadership theory stands as an early and original indigenous leadership theory in China. However, the current research on this theory remains limited. Existing studies predominantly adopt a quantitative approach, resulting in homogeneity within the research paradigm. In the realm of philosophical research paradigms, three primary paradigms prevail in management research: positivism, interpretivism, and constructivism. While a few leadership theories lean toward interpretivism or constructivism, the majority, including CPM leadership theory, tend to adopt a positivist approach.

Given that empirical research paradigm dominates in the area, future researchers could consider employing more interpretivist or constructivist research paradigms to investigate the CPM leadership theory. Embracing these alternative paradigms could enrich our understanding of the CPM theory's application and implications. This shift toward interpretivist or constructivist perspectives would provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of leadership phenomena and contribute to the development of a more diverse and holistic body of knowledge in the field of leadership research.

Table 1. Studies on the mechanisms and outcomes of CPM leadership in Chinese literature

Independent variable	Mediators	Moderators	Dependent variables	Researchers and years of publication
CPM leadership behaviors			Organizational harmony	Li et al., 2012
	Trust in supervisor Emotional commitment		Altruistic behavior Work engagement	Li & Ling, 2012
	Procedural justice climate Cognitive trust, emotional trust		Group citizenship behavior	Lyu & Ling, 2012
		Personal integrity	Willingness to follow Supervisor commitment Job motivation Leadership satisfaction	Li et al., 2013
	Trust from leaders		Employee counterproductive behavior	Ling & Wang, 2014
	Emotional commitment Organizational psychological ownership		Harmonious organization	Li, 2015

3.1.2 Transformational Leadership in the Chinese Context (变革型领导)

Origins and Definition

The transformational leadership theory was initially introduced and developed by Bass (1985). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership inspires subordinates to understand task significance, promote higher-level needs, foster the climate mutual trust, motivate sacrifice for organizational benefits, and ultimately achieve outcomes beyond initial expectations. Building upon this foundation, Bass and his colleagues further refined the theory and identified four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1990). They also developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Avolio et al., 1999) as a reliable measurement tool to assess transformational leadership effectively.

Considering the influence of culture on leadership, many researchers have undertaken efforts to explore and comprehend the nature and components of transformational leadership across various national contexts. For instance, Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2001) employed a grounded theory approach in UK organizations to further refine the dimensions of transformational leadership and developed a new version of the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ). Li and Shi (2005) also suggested that, owing to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, the leadership process in China may share similarities with that in the Western context but it also possesses its own unique aspects. To account for these distinctions, they adopted an inductive approach to develop a new measurement tool that specifically captures the dimensions of transformational leadership in the Chinese context, identifying the dimensions somewhat differently from Western perspectives.

Content Dimensions

Through the inductive approach, Li and Shi (2005) identified four dimensions of transformational leadership in the Chinese context: (1) moral modeling, indicating leaders' unwavering dedication, self-sacrifice, consistency between words and actions, integrity, leading by example, and upholding elevated standards; (2) individualized consideration, which emphasizes leaders' display of concern for employees' work and their daily lives, recognizing their unique needs and circumstances; (3) vision articulation, whereby leaders provide employees with a clear vision and direction, effectively communicating the organization's goals and aspirations; and (4) charisma, which refers to leaders who demonstrate passion and courage, captivating and inspiring others through their dynamic and magnetic qualities. This insightful research by Li and Shi (2005) provides valuable understanding into the distinct dimensions that define transformational leadership in the Chinese context.

The four dimensions constructed by Li and Shi (2005) exhibit both similarities to and distinctions from those proposed by Avolio et al. (1999). Notably, the essence of two dimensions—vision articulation and charisma—aligns with the conceptualization presented by the MLQ. However, Li and Shi (2005) introduced a unique dimension, moral modeling, which emphasizes the role of leaders as ethical role models who have a significant influence on their followers. The morality dimension is consistent with the perspectives of Chinese culture, which specifically underscores the ethics as the cornerstone of leadership. Moreover, Li and Shi's dimension of individualized consideration extends beyond focusing solely on employees' work and personal development, encompassing their families and personal lives as well. This expanded focus underscores the comprehensive care and support that leaders provide to their subordinates within the cultural context of China. Furthermore, the lack of intellectual stimulation dimension is consistent with the

characteristics of a high-power-distance culture.

Cultural Origins

The foundations of the moral modeling dimension of Chinese transformational leadership can be traced back to the influence of Confucianism. Confucius emphasized the significance of leaders serving as ethical role models and believed that the most effective way to govern is by exemplifying ethical behavior and implicitly influencing others. The ethical and moral values inherent in Confucian teachings have had a profound impact on the development of transformational leadership in Chinese culture.

The cultural aspect of high power distance can also explain why intellectual stimulation was not included in Chinese transformational leadership theory. As suggested by Robert et al. (2000), “in more vertical national cultures, those who are at the top are expected to take charge, to be in control, to give orders, and to know what is right” (p. 645). This cultural expectation aligns with the notion that leaders are perceived to possess authority and are expected to assert their control and knowledge. Consequently, the dimension of intellectual stimulation, which emphasizes encouraging employees to think critically and challenge the status quo, may be less prominent in transformational leadership in the Chinese context.

Findings from Past Research

An increasing body of research has employed Li and Shi's (2005) scale to assess transformational leadership within the Chinese context and explore its relationship with various outcomes. For example, Liu et al. (2010) examined the influence of transformational leadership in predicting employees' well-being within Chinese organizations, highlighting the mediating role of trust toward the leader and personal self-efficacy. Their findings underscored the significance of transformational

leadership in fostering positive employee well-being in Chinese workplaces. Similarly, Pillai et al. (2011) revealed that Chinese transformational leadership plays a crucial role in building trust through procedural justice and distributive justice, which, in turn, predicts followers' job satisfaction and commitment. Moreover, Li et al. (2015) explored the effects of transformational leadership on individual creativity. By systematically examining the impact of Chinese transformational leadership on organizations and employees and its underlying mechanisms, scholars have advanced the knowledge surrounding transformational leadership and offered practical implications for leadership development and effectiveness in the Chinese cultural setting.

Future Research Prospects

In a critically assessment in this area of transformational leadership, Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) identified several problems within this theory. First, while transformational leadership is a multidimensional construct, there is no conceptual specification on how these dimensions are included and how they combine to form transformational leadership. Second, current theory has failed to understand how each dimension has a distinct influence on mediating processes and outcomes.

Transformational leadership in the Chinese context also encounters analogous limitations. Although Li and Shi (2005) made efforts to incorporate new dimensions and eliminate certain components based on cultural factors, the challenge persists in definitively establishing the necessity of these dimensions for its change orientation. Moreover, existing perspectives fail to elucidate how these distinct dimensions operate through shared mediating mechanisms. Consequently, the current understanding of transformational leadership in the Chinese context requires further refinement and exploration to comprehensively address these intricacies.

Additionally, most studies utilizing Li and Shi's (2005) measure have primarily focused on its impact at the individual level. However, there is significant value in further investigating its role not only at the individual level but also at the team and organizational levels. Exploring the influence of Chinese transformational leadership across these different levels can provide a comprehensive understanding of its broader implications for organizational functioning, team dynamics, and individual performance.

3.1.3 Paternalistic Leadership (家长式领导)

Origins, Definition, and Dimensions

In the late 1980s, Cheng (1995a) employed the emic approach with a series of case studies, in-depth interviews, and quantitative research to explore the distinctive leadership styles exhibited by family business owners and managers in Taiwan. Through these studies, Cheng and his colleagues proposed the indigenous Chinese leadership theory known as paternalistic leadership. This theory frames paternalistic leadership as a leadership style that “combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity couched in a personalistic atmosphere” (Cheng et al., 2004, p. 91). By amalgamating elements of paternalism and authoritarianism, this leadership approach draws upon the cultural significance accorded in Chinese society to familial relationships, hierarchical structures, and respect for authority (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Paternalistic leadership theory suggests that this form of leadership includes three dimensions: authoritarianism, benevolence, and moral leadership. Authoritarianism (*liwei* 立威) refers to leaders' behaviors characterized by complete authority and control over subordinates, accompanied by an expectation of unwavering obedience from them. Benevolence (*shien* 施恩) reflects leaders' displays of genuine care and concern for the overall well-being of subordinates, including both at

work and in their personal lives. Moral leadership (*shude* 树德) can be broadly defined as leaders' behaviors that indicate exceptional personal moral values, self-discipline, and unselfishness (Cheng et al., 2010).

The cultural root of paternalistic leadership can be traced back to traditional Chinese values and philosophies, with Confucianism playing a central role. Under the influence of Confucianism, the family has been considered the fundamental unit of Chinese society, and it also serves as a prototype for almost all organizations. Thus, it is widely accepted in the workplace that the manager assumes the role of a father figure, while the subordinate takes on the role of a son. Furthermore, Confucianism places great emphasis on hierarchical relationships, respect for authority, and the application of moral and benevolence principles in governance. That is, leaders are expected to be moral exemplars (i.e., moral leadership), demonstrating kindness and benevolence toward their subordinates (i.e., benevolence), much like a father's care for his children. Consequently, subordinates are encouraged to attentively listen to their leaders and comply with their guidance (i.e., authoritarianism) (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Findings from Past Research

The existing research has revealed noteworthy discoveries concerning the effects of paternalistic leadership in the workplace. For example, a study conducted by Lin et al. (2021) found that paternalistic leadership significantly impacts subordinates' thriving at work via the role of work–family enrichment. Furthermore, Geng et al.'s (2021) research indicates that paternalistic leadership has an indirect effect on team creativity through the channels of team promotive voice and team inhibitive voice. Additionally, the research by Yu and Zheng (2012) suggests that paternalistic leadership indirectly influences organizational learning via the mechanism of human resource

management practice. Table 2 gives more comprehensive information regarding the relationships among variables explored in the Chinese literature.

Future Research Prospects

Despite the wealth of current literature about paternalistic leadership, there are limitations that need to be addressed. Bedi's (2020) meta-analytic review suggests that the majority of studies rely on self-reported data from employees and adopt cross-sectional designs. Additionally, the existing research has relatively overlooked the dynamic processes and developmental changes in subordinates' performance under the influence of paternalistic leadership. Therefore, future research should aim to address this gap by employing longitudinal research designs and seeking multiple sources to investigate these relationships over time.

Furthermore, it would be valuable to explore the boundary conditions and contextual factors that moderate the combined effects of different dimensions of paternalistic leadership on individual, team, and organizational outcomes. By adopting an integrated approach that encompasses these facets, a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of paternalistic leadership can be cultivated, ultimately facilitating the implementation of more effective leadership practices across diverse organizational contexts.

Moreover, most of the existing research collected data from Eastern cultures, characterized by high power distance. This makes it challenging to generalize the findings to other cultural contexts. Future research could test the replication of the existing findings in Western contexts and compare the differences in leadership effectiveness across various cultures (Bedi, 2020).

Table 2. Studies on the mechanisms and outcomes of paternalistic leadership in Chinese literature

Independent variable	Mediators	Moderators	Dependent variables	Researchers and years of publication
Paternalistic leadership			Collective orientation Familial orientation	Liu & Ling, 2004
			Employee effectiveness	Cheng et al., 2010
	Psychological empowerment		Employee job involvement	Wei & Shi, 2010
		Organizational value	Employee knowledge activities	Zhang et al., 2010
	Leader–member exchange		Employee career plateau	Zeng, 2011
	Psychological safety		Employee voice behavior	Duan, 2012
	Trust in supervisor Distrust in supervisor		Employee job satisfaction Employee loyalty to supervisor Employee job performance Employee deviance behavior toward supervisor	Jiang et al., 2012
	Perceived organizational support		Employee job satisfaction	Lin & Yang, 2013
	Perceived organizational support		Employee work alienation	Long et al., 2014
	Leader–member exchange relationship		Teacher job satisfaction Teacher organizational citizenship behaviors	Li & Chang, 2014

	Self-efficacy	Perceived organizational support	Employee voice behavior	Tian & Huang, 2014
	Superior-subordinate <i>guanxi</i>		Employee voice behavior	Zhou, 2014
	Psychological empowerment		Employee innovative behaviors	Li et al., 2014
	Creative self-efficacy	Chinese traditionality	Employee innovative behaviors	Wang, 2015
	Sport motivation	Sport value	Sportspersonship	Zhang, 2015
	Supervisor's trust		Employee knowledge sharing	Wu & Zhou, 2016
	Leader-member exchange		Employee voice behavior	Wu et al., 2016
	Interactive equity		Employee anti-production behavior	Ren & Li, 2016
	Deep acting Surface acting		Employee task performance Employee workplace deviance	Lee et al., 2016
		Individual traditionality	Employee unethical pro-organizational behavior	Zhang et al., 2017
	Work-family culture Emotional exhaustion Well-being		Employee turnover intentions	Zhao et al., 2020
	Affective commitment Psychological empowerment Leader-member exchange		Employee altruistic behavior	Wu et al., 2020
			Employee promotive voice Employee prohibitive voice	Mao et al., 2020

	Work to family enrichment Family to work enrichment		Employee thriving at work	Lin et al., 2021
	Deep acting Surface acting		Employee voice behavior	Lee et al., 2021
	Job involvement	Team positive emotional climate	Employee craftsmanship	Zhu et al., 2022
	Exploratory innovation Exploitative innovation		Product innovation	Fu et al., 2012
	Team cultural values		Team commitment	Tang & Sung, 2004
	Team conflicts management		Team performance	Zhang et al., 2009
	Coach–athlete relationship		Team cohesion	Huang & Nien, 2015
	Knowledge sharing Knowledge integration		Team innovation performance	Jin et al., 2016
	Transactive memory system		Team innovation performance	Zhao & Nie, 2018
	Team promotive voice Team inhibitive voice	Team traditionality	Team creativity	Geng et al., 2021
	TMT conflict		TMT strategic decision outcomes	Chen et al., 2010
	Team cohesion		TMT team effectiveness	Chen et al., 2012
	Psychological empowerment	Power distance Collectivism	TMT members' creativity	Chen et al., 2013
			Organizational justice	Zhou & Long, 2007

			Organizational learning	Yu et al., 2007 Yu et al., 2009
	Human resource management practice		Organizational learning	Yu & Zheng, 2012
		Corporate social responsibility orientation	Organizational innovation performance	Yang & Wei, 2012
	Knowledge sharing		Organizational effectiveness	Zhang et al., 2015

3.1.4 Fraternalistic Leadership (兄长式领导)

Origins, Definition, and Dimensions

With the development of social modernization and the widespread dissemination of Western ideologies, the cultural values of Chinese society are gradually changing. Several significant factors have profoundly impacted traditional Chinese culture, including the implementation of the one-child policy, the influence of Western ideologies, the emergence of *pizi* (“riffraff”) literature, and the widespread use of the Internet. These factors have prompted scholars to critically reflect on the unquestionable hierarchical authority and effectiveness of paternalistic leadership.

As a result, Yang and Ding (2012) introduced the construct of fraternalistic leadership. This diverges from paternalistic leadership by prioritizing communication on equal terms, rather than deliberately establishing absolute authority. It relies on fostering an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect, where leaders and subordinates engage in open and collaborative dialogue. Additionally, the core of fraternalistic leadership is the cultivation of a shared vision that unites all members of the organization. Leaders employing this style emphasize the importance of a compelling and inspiring vision that motivates individuals to work together harmoniously toward common goals. This grand vision serves as a guiding force, fostering cohesion and collaboration among team members (Yang & Ding, 2012).

Fraternalistic leadership consists of four dimensions: personal charisma and all-round influence (i.e., establishing personal prestige and influence by displaying personal charm); shared vision and motivation (i.e., establishing a collective sense of purpose and direction, ensuring that all members are aligned and motivated to achieve common goals); reciprocal social exchange and the importance of meeting multidimensional needs (i.e., sharing benefits with employees and meeting their personal

needs); and emphasis on public virtue rather than private virtue (i.e., adhering to moral principles without needing to be a role model) (Yang & Ding, 2012).

Future Research Prospects

Despite the growing interest in fraternalistic leadership, it has received limited attention so far, with only one qualitative study available. Presently, fraternalistic leadership appears to encapsulate limited cultural characteristics, and its fundamental divergence from other Western leadership theories remains challenging to discern. Moving forward, it is crucial to further refine the conceptualization and dimensions of fraternalistic leadership. Clarifying its unique attributes and cultural underpinnings will be pivotal in advancing our understanding of fraternalistic leadership and its implications in organizational contexts.

Additionally, the development of a reliable and valid scale is necessary to facilitate quantitative research on its impact within organizations. Employing quantitative research will provide a deeper understanding of how fraternalistic leadership influences various organizational outcomes and will explore its implications across different organizational contexts. This will enhance our understanding of the dynamics and outcomes associated with this leadership style and contribute to the development of evidence-based leadership practices.

3.1.5 Ethical Leadership (德行领导)

Origin and Definition

Ethical leadership was first proposed by Makarushka and Lally (1974) and later defined by Treviño et al. (2000) as encompassing two key aspects: the “moral person” and the “moral manager.” As a moral person, ethical leaders are characterized by moral traits, such as trustworthiness, integrity, and honesty, and the concept of the moral manager highlights that ethical leaders not only need to

exhibit ethical behaviors (e.g., consistently doing the right things and demonstrating genuine concern for others) and engage in objective decision-making processes but also take action to foster ethics within the workplace (e.g., actively communicating about ethics and values with their followers; establishing rewards and disciplinary measures to ensure that team members adhere to ethical standards). Building upon this framework, Brown et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (p. 120).

Traditional Chinese culture has a rich history of emphasizing moral and ethical values (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). This cultural emphasis on ethics underscores the relevance and significance of ethical leadership within the context of Chinese leadership. Two prominent Chinese philosophies, Confucianism and Taoism, place significant emphasis on role of morality in leadership. For instance, Confucius’s notion of *junzi*, often translated as “gentleman,” encompasses the holistic integration of virtuous behaviors and character traits (Chen, 2010). According to Confucian ideals, ethical leaders embody the qualities of *junzi*. In particular, the *Analects*, the classic text of Confucianism, introduces the concepts of *xiuji* (self-cultivation) and *anren* (the promotion of goodness to others). These notions can be seen as corresponding to the “moral person” and “moral manager” aspects of ethical leadership (Zhu et al., 2019).

Considering the principles shared by Western ethical leadership theory and Chinese philosophy, Zhu et al. (2019) proposed the concept of Chinese ethical leadership and developed a new scale to assess it. Moreover, they conducted research to test the measurement invariance across Chinese and American contexts. By combining elements from both Western and Chinese perspectives, this

framework offers a comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership that aligns with the cultural and philosophical context of China. Embracing the perspectives of Chinese philosophy and integrating them into the concept of ethical leadership acknowledge the unique cultural values that shape leadership practices in China, providing valuable insights for leadership development in this context.

Content Dimensions

Zhu and his colleagues (2019) advanced the conceptualization of ethical leadership, which incorporates *xiuji* and *anren*. *Xiuji* refers to leaders cultivating and developing themselves as virtuous and moral people, aligning with the “moral person” dimension proposed by Treviño et al. (2000), and *anren* focuses on leaders’ ability to bring goodness to followers. While *anren* does not correspond exactly to the “moral manager” aspect, it does have some overlap with the idea of positively influencing followers and guiding them to behave ethically.

To capture the nature of ethical leadership, Zhu and his colleagues (2019) employed content analysis techniques, including open questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and a comprehensive literature review. Based on this analysis, they generated an item pool and invited participants to complete a survey. Their exploratory factor analysis revealed four distinct factors that demonstrated the underlying dimensions of ethical leadership: moral characteristics, which reflects leaders’ ethical and moral traits and characteristics; moral cognition, including leaders’ awareness of moral issues and their ability to make ethical judgments; moral role modeling, capturing leaders’ display of ethical behaviors; and moral atmosphere creation, highlighting leaders’ role in fostering a moral climate. The first two factors fall under the *xiuji* aspect of ethical leadership, while the latter factors fall under the *anren* aspect. This framework not only provides valuable insights into the multifaceted

nature of ethical leadership but also integrates commonalities between Western ethical leadership theory and Chinese philosophical teachings, offering a deeper understanding of ethical leadership within a cross-cultural context (Zhu et al., 2019).

Findings from Past Research

A growing body of research has focused on the mechanisms of ethical leadership, based on the conceptualization proposed by Zhu et al. (2019). These studies have aimed to uncover the underlying processes and effects of ethical leadership in the workplace. For instance, Zhu et al. (2019) found that ethical leadership is positively related to follower affective organizational commitment, follower organizational citizenship behaviors, and job performance. Furthermore, Si et al. (2023) contributed to the research in this area by examining the impact of ethical leadership on workplace mindfulness and employee well-being. These studies collectively highlight the significant impact of ethical leadership on employee behaviors, attitudes, and well-being, which underscores the importance of ethical leadership in promoting positive organizational outcomes and enhancing employee experiences within the workplace.

Future Research Prospects

The conceptualization and measurement scale proposed by Zhu et al. (2019) were initially tested within the contexts of China and the USA. While the scale demonstrated configural invariance and partial metric invariance across Chinese and American samples, there is a need to explore cross-cultural similarities and differences in ethical leadership across a broader range of cultures. By conducting research in diverse cultural contexts, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how ethical leadership operates across different societies and value systems. This will help identify cultural nuances and adaptations that may be required for ethical leadership to be

effective in various cultural settings.

In addition, reviews about ethical leadership suggest that most of the existing research has adopted cross-sectional designs. Therefore, there is a pressing need for longitudinal studies to explore how ethical leadership unfolds over time and for experimental research to examine causal relationships (Bedi et al., 2016; Den Hartog, 2015). Moreover, these reviews also indicate that the current research has relied on followers' perceptions to measure ethical leadership. Acknowledging the potential bias in perceptions, future research could incorporate both employee and leader data to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of ethical leadership (Bedi et al., 2016; Den Hartog, 2015).

3.1.6 Tao-Oriented Leadership (道本领导)

Origin, Definition, and Dimensions

Beyond the focus on leadership within Confucianism, Taoist culture also contributes distinctive insights into what makes the best leaders. Notably, one of the Taoist classic texts, the *Tao Te Ching*, has significant guidance for leadership.

Through the lens of Taoist philosophy, Zhang et al. (2019) introduced the conceptual framework of Tao-oriented leadership utilizing a three-level coding method within grounded theory. This leadership paradigm revolves around Tao-oriented thinking (objective laws) and is underpinned by the naturalness-oriented principle (naturalness). It entails the embodiment of elevated moral qualities including self-awareness, self-righteousness, selflessness, altruism, empowerment, shared governance, transcendence, and prudence, which function to optimize overall performance to its fullest potential. Specifically, Tao-oriented leadership consists of four dimensions: Tao-oriented thinking, naturalness-oriented principle, highest moral behavior, and holistic performance.

Finding from Past Research

The existing literature has refined the Tao-oriented leadership theory model based on Taoist philosophy, and clearly divided its structural dimensions. In addition, it has explored the logical relationships between and within each dimension and proposed the overall performance matrix of Tao-oriented leadership, thus forming an important comprehensive index that can better assess the leader's performance compared to the financial indexes in previous studies (Zhang et al., 2019).

Future Research Prospects

While previous research has employed grounded theory to investigate the essence of Tao-oriented leadership, the current status of this leadership model remains in a nascent stage. It appears to encompass a multitude of concepts, making it challenging to extract its core essence and distinguish it from other leadership styles. This complexity also presents difficulties in adequately reflecting the inherent Taoist features within this leadership theory. Further research and discussion are therefore necessary to clarify the nature and effectiveness, test the theoretical saturation and improve the theoretical model of Tao-oriented leadership. Additionally, an opportunity exists for comparative analysis between Tao-oriented leadership and well-established, mature leadership theories, which would help extract the useful constructs and items to further develop scales and explore the nomological network to construct a solid Tao-oriented leadership theory with Chinese cultural characteristics.

3.2 Holistic Dynamic Balance Perspective and Leadership

In this section, a review and synthesis of related indigenous leadership theories adopting the holistic dynamic balance perspective in addressing both internal and external challenges are conducted. The emphasis on these aspects within these theories also aligns with the views highlighted in Chinese

culture and philosophy.

3.2.1 Differential Leadership (差序式领导)

Origin, Definition, and Dimensions

Differential leadership is an indigenous leadership style that originated in Cheng's (1995b) theory of local leaders' biased behavior based on Fei's (1948) differential mode of association (*chaxugeju* 差序格局). This perspective illuminates that interpersonal dynamics among Chinese people are inherently self-centered, with interpersonal behaviors adapting in accordance with the closeness of the relationship with oneself. Building upon this notion, Cheng (1995b) points out that leaders are likely to treat their followers differently based on the varying closeness of their relationships and other criteria.

This theory suggests that leaders classify their followers into in-group and out-group members using three criteria: relationship, loyalty, and competence. Relationship refers to the level of closeness (*guanxi*) between the leader and followers; loyalty encompasses the extent to which employees display obedience to the leader, including a strong sense of responsibility toward, a willingness to make sacrifices for, and a sense of identification with the leader; and competence indicates subordinates' capacity. If subordinates establish a close relationship with the leader, demonstrate a high degree of loyalty, and have the ability to make contributions to the organization, the leader is inclined to perceive and treat them as in-group members. Additionally, the boundary between in-group and out-group is dynamic, flexible, and open. If the leader recognizes an out-group member as qualified to be one of the in-group members, the subordinate will progressively become an in-group member, and vice versa (Jiang & Cheng, 2014).

Moreover, Jiang and Chang (2010) further distinguished between behaviors toward in-group and

out-group followers and developed a scale of differential leadership that builds upon Cheng's (1995b) research findings. The scale consists of three dimensions: supporting communication, rewarding promotion, and trusting tolerance. This framework provides a more nuanced and comprehensive lens through which to comprehend the dynamics of leadership differentials.

In Western leadership theory, leader-member exchange (LMX) has similarities with differential leadership, but they differ in their focus. Wang, Cheng, and Wang's research (2018) elaborated on the distinctions between these two constructs. Specifically, differential leadership emphasizes the differential behaviors exhibited by a leader toward in-group and out-group members, whereas LMX primarily focuses on the quality of relationships between the leader and members (Jiang & Cheng, 2014). Moreover, LMX describes a work-based relationship between leaders and subordinates. On the other hand, differential leadership shows a mixed relationship between the leader and subordinates, encompassing both a contractual relationship in the workplace and an identity relationship in life (Guo, 2011).

Findings from Past Research

The existing research has uncovered significant findings regarding the impact of differential leadership on individual and team outcomes, for instance that differential leadership has a positive impact on employees' pro-organizational unethical behavior (Lin & Cheng, 2017), and it has a negative influence on followers' silent behavior (Yang et al., 2018). Additionally, research by Zhao et al. (2018) suggests that differential leadership predicts team creativity and knowledge hiding. Further details regarding the mechanisms and outcomes of transformational leadership studied in Chinese literature can be found in Table 3.

Future Research Prospects

The current body of research on differential leadership suggests a growing interest in this area. However, it is evident that the existing literature on differential leadership lacks comprehensive discussions regarding its fundamental nature. In particular, while earlier research has touched upon the differences between differential leadership theory and LMX, the exact distinctions remain elusive. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more in-depth research into the fundamental nature of differential leadership. Such research can help clarify whether differential leadership represents a distinct construct on its own or if it should be considered a dimension within the broader framework of LMX theory.

Furthermore, scholars are advised to undertake research and engage in discussions grounded in various theoretical perspectives rather than being limited to a single framework. Embracing multiple theoretical perspectives will enrich the scholarly discourse on differential leadership and provide a more comprehensive understanding of its complexity. By incorporating diverse theoretical frameworks, researchers can shed new light on the phenomenon and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this area.

Table 3. Studies on the mechanisms and outcomes of differential leadership in Chinese literature

Independent variable	Mediators	Moderators	Dependent variables	Researchers and years of publication
Differential leadership	Perceived supervisory fairness	Power distance	Employee effectiveness	Jiang & Zhang, 2010
	Work engagement	Leaders' innovation expectations	Employee innovation behavior	Yuan et al., 2016
		Leadership organizational representation Staff collectivist tendencies	Employee pro-organizational unethical behavior	Lin & Cheng, 2017
	Self-efficacy	Employment relationship atmosphere Organic organizational structure	Employee silent behavior	Yang et al., 2018
	Psychological empowerment	Cognitive conflict	Bootleg innovation	Wang et al., 2018
	Organizational commitment Insider identity recognition		Employees' suggestion-making behavior	Li et al., 2019
	Psychological capital		Teacher working engagement	Mao et al., 2019
	Endogenous motivation	Insider identity perception Team motivation atmosphere	Constructive bootleg behaviors of knowledge workers	Zhao, 2019
	Psychological empowerment	Team ethical atmosphere	Counterproductive work behavior of staff	Liu et al., 2020
	Creativity self-efficacy	<i>Zhongyong</i> thinking (the doctrine of the mean)	Staff creativity	Wu et al., 2021

	Organizational self-esteem Work reinvention	Career calling	Staff career growth	Chen et al., 2021
	Team task conflict Team relationship conflict	Team identity	Team creativity Team knowledge hiding	Zhao et al., 2018
	Interactive memory system	Knowledge transfer channels	Team knowledge transfer performance	Sun et al., 2019

3.2.2 *Paradoxical Leadership (悖论式领导) and Dialectical Leadership (辩证领导)*

Origins and Definition

Leaders inevitably encounter and navigate contradictions when managing their followers in the workplace, frequently leading to tensions. For instance, they are required to treat followers in a uniform and fair manner, while also considering subordinates' individualized needs. Furthermore, leaders must adhere to organizational rules while simultaneously fostering an environment that allows for flexibility. Therefore, the capacity to effectively address these paradoxical challenges is vital for successful people management and the growth of organizations (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015). Building upon the paradoxical perspective and leadership research, Zhang et al. (2015) proposed the construct of paradoxical leadership based on the Chinese yin–yang philosophy, providing a valuable framework for understanding and navigating such tensions.

Yin–yang philosophy provides a holistic and dynamic understanding of the world, where the integration of yin (representing “female” energy) and yang (representing “male” energy) shapes all aspects of universal phenomena (Fang, 2012). It suggests that, although paradoxical dualities may initially appear contradictory and separate from one another, they are fundamentally interdependent and complementary. Unlike the contingent approaches of “either–or” thinking, where the choice between maintaining control and allowing autonomy depends on the context, the paradoxical approach embraces a “both–and” logic, recognizing the holistic nature of contradictions and effectively navigating the conflicting demands simultaneously (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Zhang et al., 2015). This perspective shapes leaders' mindset and behavioral responses when faced with paradoxes, fostering a more comprehensive and balanced approach to leadership.

Based on the yin–yang perspective, Zhang and her colleagues proposed and extensively explored

paradoxical leadership at the micro and macro levels: paradoxical leader behavior in people management (PLB; Zhang et al., 2015) and in long-term corporate development (PLB-CD; Zhang & Han, 2019). In the domain of people management, PLB focuses on addressing paradoxical challenges at the micro level, where the aim is to reconcile the competing needs of organizational structure and followers' personal needs. Thus, PLB is defined as "seemingly competing, yet interrelated, behaviors to meet structural and follower demands simultaneously and over time" (Zhang et al., 2015, p. 538). In the domain of long-term corporate development, PLB-CD centers on tackling macro-level paradoxical challenges. It aims to navigate the paradoxes between current survival demands and future existence or development demands. Additionally, it seeks to simultaneously address the competing needs of various stakeholders while also conforming and shaping the collective forces in the environment. Hence, PLB-CD is defined as "competing yet interrelated leader behaviors intended to meet competing demands in corporate development simultaneously and over time" (Zhang & Han, 2019, p. 43).

Similarly, combined with the paradoxical perspective and Chinese dialectical thinking, Huang and Wang (2017) proposed the construct of dialectical leadership for executives. This strategic leadership approach is characterized by "timely adapting organizational strategy and managerial practices to environmental changes, understanding and balancing between management contradictions, and holistically coordinating different departments and resources in organizations" (Wang et al., 2023, p. 389).

While paradoxical leadership and dialectical leadership have similarities in the way that they deal with paradoxical challenges, there are differences between these two approaches. PLB places its emphasis on people management for team leaders, whereas dialectical leadership behaviors are

typically exhibited by executives and include not only managing people but also managing overall business strategy and organizational operations. Although PLB-CD focuses on executives' behaviors in terms of the tradeoff between the needs of organizational development and the conflicting forces affecting long-term business growth, it fails to fully capture the dynamic process of paradox management. In contrast, dialectical leadership not only emphasizes weighing contradictions but also underscores dynamics and adopts a holistic approach to managing complex situations effectively (Wang et al., 2023). Based on the appealing theoretical differentiation, Wang et al. (2023) further investigated the discriminant validity of dialectical leadership versus paradoxical leadership, supporting its theoretical distinctiveness.

Content Dimensions

In light of the diverse paradoxes encountered by leaders at various levels, Zhang and her colleagues (2015) proposed five distinct dimensions of paradoxical leadership concerning PLB and PLB-CD: (1) the combination of being self-centered and other-centered (SO); (2) keeping both distance and closeness with followers (DC); (3) treating employees equally while allowing for individualization (UI); (4) implementing work requirements while allowing followers to act flexibly (RF); and (5) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy of subordinates (CA).

Further, building upon the competing needs of business development, which encompass the “present–future” paradox and the “organization–environment” paradox, Zhang and Han (2019) proposed four dimensions of PLB-CD: (1) maintaining both short-term organizational efficiency and long-term growth (SL); (2) striking a balance between organizational stability and flexibility (SF); (3) considering the interests of shareholders and stakeholders (SS); and (4) conforming to and shaping collective forces within the environment (CS).

In terms of dialectical leadership, Wang et al. (2023) suggested that dialectical leadership behavior consists of six key dimensions: (1) timely adjustment, (2) individualized mentoring, (3) analyzing and weighing contradictions, (4) balancing kindness and strictness, (5) promoting coordination, and (6) holistically managing.

Findings from Past Research

Extensive research has demonstrated the importance of paradoxical leadership on various employee outcomes. For instance, Zhang et al. (2015) found that paradoxical leadership has a positive impact on employee adaptability, enabling individuals to navigate and respond effectively to changing circumstances. Additionally, Luo et al. (2015) identified a positive relationship between paradoxical leadership and knowledge team innovation, highlighting how leaders who embrace paradoxes foster a climate conducive to creative problem-solving and idea generation within teams. Moreover, Su and Lei (2018) discovered a positive association between paradoxical leadership and employee creativity, indicating that leaders who navigate contradictory demands can inspire and empower employees to think outside the box and explore innovative solutions. Furthermore, Li et al. (2018) revealed that paradoxical leadership is related to employee constructive behavior, emphasizing that leaders who effectively manage paradoxes foster a work environment characterized by collaboration, mutual support, and proactive engagement. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing research on paradoxical leadership, Tan et al. (2020) conducted a systematic and detailed review study. This review consolidates and synthesizes the findings from multiple studies, offering valuable insights into the impact of paradoxical leadership on employee outcomes and illuminating potential directions for future research in this domain.

Although paradoxical leadership is a construct proposed based on Chinese yin–yang thinking, it is

not unique to Chinese contexts. Many Western scholars have also examined its adoption and effects in non-Chinese contexts. For example, Franken et al. (2020) discussed the role of paradoxical leadership in fostering employee resilience using a sample from a large New Zealand public sector organization. Additionally, Fürstenberg et al. (2021) recruited German sample to construct a German version of the paradoxical leadership scale based on Zhang et al.'s (2015) PLB-22 and explored the indirect effect of paradoxical leadership on employee work engagement through the mediating role of goal clarity and work autonomy.

In the domain of dialectical leadership, the existing body of empirical research remains limited. Notably, Huang and Wang (2017) took a comprehensive approach by employing a combination of interviews and surveys to first capture the nature and multifaceted dimensions of dialectical leadership. Wang et al. (2023) revalidated the scale, compared the dialectical leadership behaviors observed in China and in US companies, and explored the outcomes of this leadership. They found that CEO dialectical leadership behavior in Chinese companies improved firm innovative capability and performance through the mechanism of firm strategic flexibility.

Future Research Prospects

Although the aforementioned findings provide valuable insights, there are certain limitations that should be addressed in future studies. For instance, Batool et al.'s (2023) review suggests the importance of refining and enriching the study design by employing longitudinal designs and conducting process-based studies. This approach will allow for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of the causal relationships between variables, providing a clearer picture of how paradoxical leadership unfolds over time.

In addition to these considerations, it is crucial to investigate the nomological network of

paradoxical leadership and dialectical leadership, especially its antecedents. Further, the processes through which paradoxical leadership and dialectical leadership influence outcomes will help identify the key factors that contribute to their effectiveness.

Moreover, conducting studies about these two types of leadership in Western contexts and facilitating cross-cultural comparisons will provide valuable insights into their effectiveness and contribute to the consideration of contextual factors that shape the effectiveness of these leadership approaches across different cultural settings.

3.2.3 Crisis Leadership (危机领导)

Origin and Definition

The inevitability of crises has become apparent in modern society, highlighting the critical need for organizations to effectively navigate uncertainty and skillfully manage internal and external crises.

Amid these challenges, effective crisis leadership has emerged as the cornerstone for organizations to not only survive but also thrive and maintain competitiveness (Wu et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021).

In the previous literature, researchers have primarily explored crisis leadership from the perspective of crisis management. For instance, Wu et al. (2021), aligned with the process view of crisis management, conceptualized crisis leadership as “a leadership process around times of crisis, including times immediately prior to crises, the duration of crises as they unfold, and times immediately after the acute consequences of crises” (p. 3). Similarly, Collins et al. (2023) defined crisis leadership as “the influencing process that occurs between a leader and stakeholders (internal and external) in the context of organizational crises, as opposed to run-of-the-mill business challenges, over the various stages of the crisis lifecycle” (p. 2). Both perspectives highlight the understanding that crisis leadership entails more than addressing the immediate impact of a crisis.

It involves adopting a long-term, strategic perspective on how organizations can survive and thrive during a crisis. Within the development of crisis leadership, two main branches of research have emerged. The first branch concentrates on the “trait and competence” of crisis leaders, while the second branch delves into the “behavior” of leaders during crises.

However, the existing literature lacks a unified definition of crisis leadership and a systematic study of its dimensions. Specifically, research on the dimensions of crisis leadership has tended to either explore only “traits” or focus solely on certain “behaviors,” resulting in a fragmented understanding of the field. This gap has hindered the development of crisis leadership. Recognizing this deficiency, Zheng et al. (2021), guided by classical grounded theory, proposed the FLIGHT model of crisis leadership via case studies. They defined crisis leadership as a process wherein a leader takes responsibility and expresses their conviction in a dynamic, complex, and uncertain emergency, and leads the organization to turn the crisis into an opportunity with the ability to manage the overall situation and unite people, ultimately achieving organizational goals. The model fills this gap and provides a foundation for further research and understanding of crisis leadership, thus making a valuable contribution to the field.

Content Dimensions

Drawing from the perspective of leadership and centered on the typical case of Chinese flight captain LIU Chuanjian, Zheng et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of crisis leadership. Through the collection and coding of data from various sources, including news media reports and in-depth interviews, they constructed the concept and dimensions of crisis leadership. The research identified six key dimensions of crisis leadership: Foresee the Crisis (F), Load the Responsibility (L), Insist on the Faith (I), Govern the Situation (G), Head the People (H), and Thrive on Crisis (T).

The Foresee the Crisis (F) dimension refers to the leader's insights and vigilance regarding the precursors of a crisis, enabling them to make advance judgments; this dimension is primarily characterized by information sensitivity and risk assessment. The Load the Responsibility (L) dimension pertains to a leader's attitude and courage to step forward, take responsibility, and make effort to resolve a crisis from a holistic perspective. It consists of two main aspects: the willingness to take responsibility and a global awareness. The Insist on the Faith (I) dimension refers to the leader's strong determination and perseverance in overcoming a crisis, with an unwavering belief and the resilience that they will not cease until the goals are achieved. Govern the Situation (G) reflects the ability to quickly control the crisis and effectively handle complex circumstances. It is primarily manifested in two aspects: staying calm under pressure and making rapid decisions. Head the People (H) signifies a leader's ability to stabilize people's minds, inspire their potential, and foster collaboration and progress during a crisis. Thrive on Crisis (T) involves continuously examining and reflecting on the crisis, seeking opportunities, and achieving growth and development amid the crisis.

Cultural Origins

In addition to drawing insights from the process view of crisis management, this model of crisis leadership also draws inspiration from Chinese philosophy of "unity of knowledge and action." Of the six dimensions of crisis leadership, Foresee the Crisis, Load the Responsibility, and Insist on the Faith belong to the realm of "knowledge" for leaders and correspond to epistemology; Govern the Situation, Head the People, and Thrive on Crisis belong to the domain of "action" and correspond to practicality. When confronted with a crisis, leaders must initially adopt the appropriate mindset and cognitive approach toward the crisis itself. Building upon this understanding, they should

proceed to take decisive action. Ultimately, to effectively achieve their desired goals, leaders must integrate their conceptual grasp of principles with their practical implementation. Only through the harmonization of knowledge and action can leaders effectively navigate and respond to crises, thereby turning crises into opportunities.

Future Research Prospects

According to the existing literature, there is a lack of research related to crisis leadership. The studies that have been conducted focuses on the typical case of the Chinese flight captain and propose the FLIGHT model of crisis leadership. Moreover, adaptive leadership, as introduced by authors Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, refers to the capacity of leaders to “anticipate future needs, articulate those needs to build collective support and understanding, adapt responses based on continuous learning, and demonstrate accountability through transparency in your decision-making process” (Ramalingam et al., 2020, para.1). While this concept shares notable similarities with crisis leadership about anticipation crisis, there is a limited body of research that systematically explores the distinctions between these two constructs. Therefore, an imperative avenue for future research lies in the nuanced exploration of these related constructs. Additionally, it would be beneficial to gather additional typical cases or conduct research on corporate practices to further support and enhance the conceptual framework from various perspectives. Such research endeavors would not only contribute to refining conceptual boundaries and enhancing the objectivity and external validity of research findings but also offer practical insights for leaders navigating complex and unpredictable situations.

Furthermore, future research should develop scales and continue to explore the nomological network of crisis leadership through empirical studies. This ongoing exploration will contribute to

a deeper understanding of crisis leadership effectiveness and facilitate the development of effective leadership strategies.

3.2.4 Vigilant Leadership (忧患型领导)

Origin, Definition, and Dimensions

Beyond crisis management, crisis anticipation and prevention also emerge as equally vital components for fostering the survival and development of organizations (Gao et al., 2020). In response to this perspective, Zhao et al. (2018) proposed the construct of vigilant leadership, drawing inspiration from the Chinese philosophical wisdom of “awareness of danger in times of peace and planning ahead” and “prevention is better than cure.” Vigilant leadership is a change-oriented and negative-focused leadership style characterized by stimulating followers to center attention on potential forthcoming challenges and take actions to avoid setbacks (Gao et al., 2024). Regarding vigilant leadership, Zhao et al. (2018) suggested that it consists of three fundamental dimensions: alerting, detecting, and preventing. Alerting refers to leaders directing employees to focus on potential problems and challenges rather than past accomplishments and to avoid blind optimism. Detecting involves leaders encouraging employees to establish a wide range of external contacts that help employees to be sensitive to subtle alarm signals and discern potential adverse consequences. Lastly, the preventing dimension underscores leaders’ encouragement of employees to take precautions against each potential challenge or threat in order to minimize the negative impact if it occurs.

Although vigilant leadership, crisis leadership, and adaptive leadership have similarities in emphasizing crisis anticipation, there are distinctions between these two approaches. The Foresee the Crisis dimension of crisis leadership and the anticipation future needs of adaptive leadership

emphasize leaders' ability and insights regarding precursors of crises, while vigilant leadership highlights leaders' influence process to direct followers to seek and address potential crises (Gao et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2024).

Findings from Past Research

Some empirical research has been conducted to explore the nomological network of vigilant leadership. After Zhao et al. (2018) proposed and validated this construct, Gao et al. (2020) explored its role on team and individual role performance. They found that vigilant leadership has indirect positive effects on team and individual role performance through team prevention focus and team reflexivity sequentially.

Furthermore, Gao et al. (2024) further explored the antecedents and outcomes of vigilant leadership. They found that leaders who are high on consideration of future consequences, prevention focus, general self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence tend to exhibit vigilant leadership. And vigilant leadership has a positive effect on follower felt responsibility for change and proactivity, teamwork proactivity, and teamwork proficiency. These findings underscore the profound effects of vigilant leadership in the workplace and more research is encouraged to further explore its nomological network.

Future Research Prospects

Considering the change-oriented nature of vigilant leadership, there is a pressing need for further research to distinguish among leadership styles that share similar characteristics (e.g., visionary leadership versus vigilant leadership). Visionary leadership, a subtype of change-oriented leadership, emphasizes the optimistic aspects of the future, whereas vigilant leadership directs its focus toward potential challenges. Despite the theoretical conceptual distinctions between these two styles,

empirical evidence has yet to robustly demonstrate the effectiveness of vigilant leadership. Additional empirical investigations are warranted to ascertain whether vigilant leadership warrants recognition as a distinct leadership style or if it might be better integrated it as a dimension within visionary leadership theory (Gao et al., 2024).

Moreover, it is worth noting that the current body of literature has predominantly discussed these leadership theories within the context of Chinese organizations. Future research could employ a comparative analysis to address how well Western leaders display the same leader behaviors and compare the cross-cultural differences.

4 Discussion: Future Research Directions

In this chapter, the role of Chinese culture in understanding leadership has been explored and a theoretical framework of indigenous Chinese leadership theories has been proposed. Furthermore, a comprehensive review and synthesis of current Chinese leadership theories and research findings have been presented, all within the context of the proposed framework. Through these discussions, the aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how culture, tradition, and contemporary dynamics converge to shape leadership practices in China.

Apart from the theories discussed in Section 3, numerous Chinese scholars actively engage in exploring diverse Chinese indigenous theories. Owing to the space constraints, this article did not discuss these in detail. For instance, Professor Youmin Xi and his team members have proposed and explored the Hexie management leadership theory (Li et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2009), Professor Tingting Chen and her co-authors have contributed to the discussion on directive-achieving leadership in Chinese culture (Chen et al., 2017), and Professor Liu and his team have delved into the exploration of spiritual leadership in China (Cui et al., 2023).

Despite the flourishing nature of existing theories, several limitations persist that require more discussions, including issues related to validation, replication, and generalization. Future research is encouraged to adopt multimethod approaches, interdisciplinary perspectives, and cross-national collaborations to revalidate these constructs and compare the findings across different contexts. The application of this comprehensive approach promises to facilitate critical analysis and contribute to the ongoing enrichment of this fascinating field.

4.1 Multimethod Approaches

A review of existing research suggests that some earlier developed leadership theories relied primarily on quantitative research methods (e.g., CPM theory), while some nascent leadership research predominantly employs qualitative research approaches (e.g., fraternalistic leadership, Tao-oriented leadership, crisis leadership). To advance the field and bridge this methodological divide, future research is encouraged to effectively integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This integration helps further validate theories and examine their impact in the workplace.

Furthermore, a limited number of studies have used the meta-analysis technique to analyze the correlations between Chinese leadership and work outcomes at the individual, team, or organization level. This avenue holds promise for future research, as conducting meta-analyses specifically focused on Chinese leadership studies could yield valuable insights and a comprehensive understanding of the field.

4.2 Interdisciplinary Perspective

Capturing the coevolutionary pattern and establishing a comprehensive nomological network of leadership requires a multifaceted approach (Zhang et al., 2014). In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognized the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary perspective to

comprehensively understand leadership (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014). Drawing from different disciplines such as anthropology, politics, and sociology, researchers have gained valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between leadership and the broader societal context. This interdisciplinary approach allows us to explore the multifaceted nature of leadership, considering not only its individual and organizational dimensions but also its profound cultural, political, and social underpinnings. By embracing this trend in the research of indigenous Chinese leadership, a richer and more holistic understanding of leadership dynamics can be attained, especially within the context of the ever-evolving landscape of Chinese leadership.

Moreover, the development of AI technology also challenges traditional notions of leadership by introducing concepts such as algorithmic decision-making, autonomous systems, and the fusion of human and machine intelligence (Shojaie, 2023). Some scholars have even proposed that human leadership may be overtaken by AI, leading to an AI-powered leadership revolution that promises to reshape the way we work, live, and communicate (Quaquebeke & Gerpott, 2023; Shojaie, 2023). In this era of AI-driven leadership, Chinese indigenous leadership theories are facing the multiple challenge of preserving the cultural and historical essence of Chinese values while embracing the transformative potential of AI. Therefore, striking a balance between tradition and innovation becomes pivotal in determining the effectiveness of Chinese leadership in the rapidly evolving world.

4.3 Cross-national Research

Cross-cultural challenges lead us to revisit the motivational efficacy and appropriateness of Chinese leadership and human resource management practices in different contexts. Recent reports from employees at TikTok UK indicate that employees were not satisfied with the leadership styles and

organizational culture featured by a “996” work pattern (i.e., working from 9am to 9pm each day, 6 days a week; Criddle, 2022). This pattern is viewed as unsustainable and detrimental to work–life balance. However, these work hours are widely accepted by Chinese employees and promoted by Chinese leaders as an indicator of being a “diligent and engaging employee in the Chinese IT industry.”

Considering the future research agenda perspective, it would be influential to organize a multinational leadership research consortium to examine the adaptation and generalizations of Chinese indigenous theories across different cultural contexts. For instance, van Dick and his colleagues (2018) collected data from 28 countries/regions regarding the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) and validated reliability and validity of the measurement. The consortium also contributes to collaborations among universities around the world. In this context, Chinese indigenous leadership studies have the potential to extend their relevance to other cultures through the communication of researchers in such a consortium, provided that researchers strategically outline new research agendas for global expansion into diverse domains.

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