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The Impact of Chinese Leadership Style on Pakistani Employees' Performance: A Case Study of Shanghai Electric Thar Coal Power Project

Shehar Bano[1] & Guo Zhi Da[2]

[1] (Corresponding Author) School of Economics & Management, Dalian Jiaotong University, Liaoning, China
Email: Sheharb09@gmail.com

[2] School of Economics & Management, Dalian Jiaotong University, Liaoning, China
Email: zhidaguo@163.com

Abstract

With the continued expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative, *Chinese enterprises are increasingly operating in culturally diverse environments, where cross-cultural management challenges have become a critical concern. Among these, the effectiveness of Chinese leadership styles in foreign cultural contexts remains insufficiently understood. This research proposes to investigate how traditional Chinese leadership styles—authoritative, benevolent, and virtuous—affect employee performance in Pakistan, an important partner country under the BRI framework. It also seeks to investigate how perceived support from the organization and cultural intelligence moderate these correlations.*

This study will use an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design with a focus on quantitative analysis supported by qualitative insights. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with managers and employees will provide deeper insights into the contextual dynamics underlying leadership effectiveness.

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is adopted, with a primary focus on quantitative analysis supported by qualitative insights. The findings are expected to contribute to leadership and cross-cultural management literature by extending Chinese leadership theory into an Islamic cultural context and by examining the interaction between leadership styles and key moderating factors.

Practically, the study aims to provide insights for multinational Chinese enterprises to enhance leadership effectiveness and improve employee performance in cross-cultural settings.

Overall, this research will provide both theoretical and practical contributions to understanding leadership effectiveness in international business environments, particularly within the context of China–Pakistan economic cooperation under the BRI.

Keywords Chinese Leadership Style; Employee Performance; Cultural Intelligence; Perceived Organizational Support

Introduction

In the context of accelerating globalization, Chinese companies have significantly increased their pace of overseas expansion. Since its launch in 2013, BRI has become a vital platform for promoting international economic cooperation. Within this framework, the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, as a flagship project, demonstrates substantial development potential. This macro-level context not only provides unprecedented opportunities for Chinese enterprises to expand abroad but also introduces complex cross-cultural management challenges.

Pakistan, as a key partner country along the BRI, has witnessed increasingly close cooperation with China in sectors such as energy and infrastructure. Shanghai Electric Thar Coalfield Block 1 Power Generation Company represents a typical example of such collaboration. As a

landmark project under CPEC, it serves as an important site for examining the overseas operational practices of Chinese enterprises. During project implementation, interactions between Chinese managers and Pakistani local employees have led to both cultural integration and friction, offering valuable empirical insights into cross-cultural leadership effectiveness.

Existing leadership theories are predominantly rooted in Western cultural contexts. In contrast, Chinese leadership styles are deeply influenced by Confucian traditions. Paternalistic leadership emphasizes authority alongside care for subordinates, authoritarian leadership prioritizes hierarchical order, and participant leadership while influenced by Western concepts exhibits unique characteristics within the Chinese context. Although these leadership styles have been widely validated in domestic settings, their applicability in different cultural environments remains under explored.

Pakistan's sociolect cultural context reflects distinctive South Asian characteristics, where Islamic traditions coexist with modern management practices. The country is characterized by relatively high power distance, indicating a general acceptance of authority, which shares certain similarities with Chinese cultural values. However, how leadership styles are viewed and implemented may be greatly impacted by variations in cooperation and avoidance of uncertainty. These cultural variations can directly affect employee responses, performance outcomes, and team dynamics.

Furthermore, advancements in digital technologies and evolving management practices have introduced new dynamics into cross-cultural interactions. While digital tools facilitate communication, they also challenge traditional face-to-face leadership models. Under these conditions, exploring the adaptability and boundary conditions of Chinese leadership styles is essential for both theoretical development and managerial practice.

This study focuses on how Chinese leadership styles influence employee performance in a cross-cultural setting. While leadership has been widely studied, there is still limited understanding of how Chinese leadership approaches affect local employees in overseas projects, especially in Pakistan. Therefore, this research aims to examine the link between leadership styles and employee performance within the context of China–Pakistan economic cooperation.

Research Significance

Theoretical Perspective: Existing leadership research is largely grounded in Western frameworks, with limited empirical validation of Chinese leadership styles in non-Chinese cultural contexts. This study extends Chinese leadership theory into a South Asian setting through empirical analysis, thereby enriching cross-cultural leadership research.

Practical Perspective: Using a real project as a case, this study offers useful guidance for Chinese managers working in Pakistan. It shows how different leadership styles can be applied in specific situations to improve employee performance. The findings also provide support for human resource practices, such as performance evaluation and employee motivation in multicultural teams.

Social Perspective: The success of the BRI relies on effective cooperation among participating countries, in which cross-cultural management plays a pivotal role. By analyzing management practices within a China–Pakistan collaboration project, this study provides valuable insights for similar BRI initiatives. It promotes mutual cultural understanding and supports the development of more harmonious international partnerships. Moreover, by emphasizing cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness, this research contributes to fostering a more open and diverse management paradigm, as well as providing theoretical support for harmonious coexistence among different cultural groups.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Leadership Styles and Employee Performance: International Research

Research on leadership styles has evolved through several stages. Early studies focused on leader traits. Stogdill (1948) reviewed leadership research and argued that no single set of traits could universally predict leadership effectiveness. This led to the behavioral approach, where Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed the Managerial Grid, distinguishing between concern for people and concern for production.

In the 1960s–1980s, contingency theories became dominant. Fiedler (1967) introduced contingency theory, suggesting leadership effectiveness depends on situational favorability. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) developed situational leadership theory, emphasizing follower readiness.

Similarly, House (1971) proposed path–goal theory, highlighting how leaders motivate subordinates by clarifying goals.

The GLOBE study, headed by House et al. (2004), which looked at leadership in 62 nations, was a significant breakthrough. According to the study, the efficacy of leadership is influenced by cultural factors. For instance, cultures with high power distance tend to support authoritarian leadership, whereas cultures with low power distance prefer participative methods.

Recent empirical studies further highlight contextual differences. Hundie and Habtewold (2024) found that transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance in Ethiopian hospitals. Febrian and Nurhalisah (2024) showed that authoritarian leadership positively affects task performance but has limited impact on contextual performance in Indonesian firms. Mpuangnan et al. (2024) demonstrated that participative leadership enhances performance through job satisfaction in multicultural teams.

Chinese Leadership Styles: Domestic Research

Chinese leadership research emerged in the 1990s, emphasizing indigenous theoretical development. Cheng et al. (2000) formally proposed the paternalistic leadership model, consisting of authoritarian, benevolent, and moral dimensions rooted in Confucian values.

Subsequent studies have expanded this framework. Fang and Li (2022) conducted a meta-analysis showing that leadership styles significantly influence employee innovation behavior. Jiang et al. (2023) examined differential leadership and found its moderating effects on employee performance. Li (2023) highlighted the "double-edged sword" effect of authoritarian leadership.

Recent research has also explored integration with other constructs. Wang (2023) analyzed the role of leadership in goal-oriented performance systems, while Zeng (2023) examined authentic leadership and psychological capital. Zhou (2024) investigated leadership styles from a human resource perspective, confirming their significant impact on employee performance.

Cross-Cultural Management and Cultural Intelligence

Cross-cultural management research integrates multiple disciplines and focuses on how cultural differences influence organizational outcomes. The theory of cultural dimensions was first presented by Hofstede (1980), who identified important factors such power distance and collective identity. This framework was further extended by the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004).To address individual-level differences, Cultural intelligence (CQ), which has cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral components, was introduced by Earley and Ang in 2003.

Recent empirical studies emphasize CQ's role in leadership effectiveness. Natsir et al. (2024) found that CQ positively influences employee performance through cognitive mechanisms.The relationship between leadership, motivation, and performance is moderated by cultural characteristics, as Getnet and Fujie (2024) showed.

Domestic scholars have also contributed. Che (2023) examined cross-cultural HR strategies in banking, while Jiang (2023) found that corporate philanthropy enhances employee performance through perceived organizational support. Han (2022) showed that incentive systems improve performance in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Research Gaps

Despite extensive research, several limitations remain. First, leadership studies are predominantly Western-centric, with limited empirical validation of Chinese leadership styles in non-Chinese contexts. Second, most studies rely on macro-level cultural frameworks, neglecting individual differences such as cultural intelligence. Third, empirical research in Belt and Road countries, particularly Pakistan, remains scarce. Finally, the interaction between leadership styles, cultural intelligence, and perceived organizational support has not been systematically examined.

Hypotheses Development

The following hypotheses are proposed:

Main Effects:

H1a: Task performance is positively correlated with paternalistic leadership.

H1b: Contextual performance is positively correlated with paternalistic leadership.H2a: Task performance is favorably correlated with authoritarian leadership.

H2b: Contextual performance is favorably correlated with authoritarian leadership.

H3a: Task performance is favorably correlated with participatory leadership.

H3b: Contextual performance is positively correlated with participatory leadership.

Moderating Effects:

H4a: The association between task performance and paternalistic leadership is moderated by cross-cultural adaptability.

H4b: The association between contextual performance and participative leadership is moderated by cross-cultural adaptability.

H5a: The association between task performance and authoritarian leadership is moderated by perceived organizational support.

Conceptual Framework

The framework depicts three leadership styles (paternalistic, authoritarian, and participative) as independent variables, employee performance (task and contextual) as dependent variables, and cross-cultural adaptability and perceived organizational support as moderating variables.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study examines an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in which quantitative research serves as the primary approach and qualitative research provides supplementary insights. This design allows for a comprehensive examination of the connection between leadership styles and employee performance, while also enabling deeper interpretation of the underlying mechanisms within a cross-cultural context.

The quantitative phase focuses on hypothesis testing and model validation, whereas the qualitative phase is used to further explain and contextualize the statistical findings. This combination enhances both the robustness and interpretability of the research results.

Research Context and Sample

The empirical context of this study is the Shanghai Electric Thar Coalfield Block 1 Power Generation Project in Pakistan, which represents a typical case of Chinese enterprise operations under the Belt and Road Initiative.

To guarantee representation across various organizational levels and job functions, a stratified random selection technique was used.The sample was stratified by department (production, sales, administration, technical) and job level to ensure diversity. A total of “350 valid questionnaires” were obtained from Pakistani employees, resulting in an effective response rate of “83.3%” after data cleaning.

To complement the quantitative data, “semi-structured interviews” were conducted with 18 participants, including both Chinese managers and Pakistani employees. These interviews provided in-depth insights into leadership practices and cross-cultural interactions within the organization.

Variable Measurements

To guarantee language and cultural equivalency, all measurement tools were first created in English and then translated into Urdu using the back-translation technique (Brislin, 1980). Unless otherwise indicated, a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was employed.

Leadership Styles

The 18-item scale created by Farh and Cheng (2000) was used to quantify paternalistic leadership. It has three dimensions: authoritarian (6 items), benevolent (6 items), and moral (6 items).

The 6-item authoritarian subscale from Bass and Avolio's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (2004) was used to gauge authoritarian leadership.

Somech (2005) created an 8-item scale to measure participative leadership.

Employee Performance

Williams and Anderson's 5-item scale was used to gauge task performance (1991). Podsakoff et al. (1990) used a 6-item organizational citizenship behavior scale to measure contextual performance.

Moderating Variables

Earley and Ang (2003) used a 20-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) with a 7-point Likert scale to gauge cross-cultural adaptability. Metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ are the four dimensions that the scale measures.

The 8-item condensed version of Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Survey of Perceived Organizational Support was used to gauge perceived organizational support.

Control Variables

Demographic variables including gender, age, education, work tenure, and department were controlled for in all regression analyses.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed a mixed-mode approach combining on-site surveys and online questionnaires to maximize coverage. A pilot research with fifty employees was carried out before official data collecting in order to improve the questionnaire's wording and spot any understanding problems.

For the quantitative phase, questionnaires were distributed during non-peak work hours in designated meeting rooms to minimize disruption. Research assistants provided standardized instructions and remained available to answer questions without influencing responses. All responders gave their informed consent, and participants were guaranteed anonymity and secrecy.

Semi-structured interviews, each lasting roughly sixty minutes, were carried out in private settings for the qualitative phase. With the participants' permission, audio recordings of the interviews were made, and the verbatim transcriptions were used for analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using "SPSS 26.0" and Mplus 8.3.The following analytical procedures were employed:

1. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis to assess data quality and internal consistency.
2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate construct validity.
3. Hierarchical regression analysis to test the main effects of leadership styles on employee performance.
4. Moderation analysis, including:
   - Simple slope tests: to examine interaction effects;
   - Johnson–Neyman (J–N) technique: to identify regions of significance for moderating variables.
5. Thematic analysis for qualitative interview data to identify key themes and patterns.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were carried out before testing the hypotheses to ensure the data met the requirements for multivariate analysis and was of adequate quality. The assessment of normality showed that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range of ±2, suggesting that the data were reasonably normally distributed.

Common method bias was evaluated using Harman's single-factor technique. The findings from the unrotated factor solution showed that several factors emerged, with the leading factor contributing 28.7% of the overall variance, which is lower than the suggested 50% benchmark. This implies that common method bias is unlikely to be a major concern in the study.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the final sample of 350 participants. The sample demonstrates a balanced representation across key demographic dimensions, supporting the generalizability of the findings.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (Demographic Profile)

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	199	56.9
	Female	151	43.1
Age	18-29 Years	154	44.0
	30-39 Years	129	36.9
	40 Years and Above	67	19.1
Education	High School or Below	118	33.7
	Associate Degree	152	43.4
	Bachelors Degree or Above	80	22.9
Work Tenure	1-3 Years	140	40.0
	3-5 Years	114	32.6
	More Than 5 Years	96	27.4
Department	Production	172	49.1
	Sales	72	20.6
	Administration	66	18.9
	Technical	40	11.4

Note: N = 350

Gender distribution:

Male participants accounted for 56.9% of the sample, while female participants represented 43.1%. This distribution reflects the typical gender composition in the power generation industry, where technical and operational roles have traditionally been male-dominated. However, the substantial female representation (over 40%) indicates meaningful inclusion of women in the workforce.

Age structure:

The most significant age group was 18–29 years old (44.0%), followed by 30–39 years old (36.9%), with 19.1% of individuals being 40 years or older.This age distribution reveals a relatively young workforce, with nearly 81% of participants under 40 years of age.

Educational attainment:

Associate degree holders constitute the largest group (43.4%), followed by those with high school education or below (33.7%), and bachelor's degree or above (22.9%). This reflects the technical requirements of power plant operations.

Work tenure:

Employees with 1–3 years of experience formed the largest cohort (40.0%), followed by those with 3–5 years (32.6%) and those with more than 5 years (27.4%).

Departmental distribution:

Production department employees constitute the largest group (49.1%), consistent with the operational nature of power generation facilities.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Key Variables:

Variables	No. of Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Paternalistic Leadership	18	3.72	0.68	0.86
Authoritarian Leadership	6	3.84	0.61	0.82
Participative Leadership	8	3.48	0.74	0.89
Task Performance	5	4.05	0.52	0.87
Contextual Performance	6	3.89	0.59	0.88
Cross-Cultural Adaptability	20	4.92	0.85	0.91
Perceived Organizational Support	8	3.76	0.64	0.85

Note: All scales used a 5-point Likert scale except Cross-Cultural Adaptability (7-point). All Cronbach's α values indicate acceptable to excellent reliability.*

The reliability assessment indicates that all measurement instruments exhibit adequate internal consistency, as Cronbach's α values fall between 0.82 and 0.91, surpassing the widely accepted minimum level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Among leadership styles, authoritarian leadership exhibited the highest mean score (M = 3.84, SD = 0.61), suggesting that Pakistani employees most strongly perceived their Chinese managers as employing directive, control-oriented behaviors. Participative leadership received the lowest mean (M = 3.48, SD = 0.74), with relatively larger standard deviation, suggesting variability in participative opportunities.

Regarding employee performance, task performance (M = 4.05, SD = 0.52) scored higher than contextual performance (M = 3.89, SD = 0.59). Cross-cultural adaptability (M = 4.92, SD = 0.85) shows a relatively high mean, indicating adequate cultural intelligence among employees.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables:

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Paternalistic Leadership	1						
Authoritarian Leadership	.24**	1					
Participative Leadership	.31**	.15*	1				
Task Performance	.43**	.31**	.39**	1			
Contextual Performance	.38**	.18**	.41**	.62**	1		
Cross-Cultural Adaptability	.28**	0.09	.36**	.33**	.42**	1	
Perceived Organizational Support	.35**	.21**	.29**	.37**	.44**	.31**	1

$p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed). N = 350*

Relationships among leadership styles reveal moderate positive correlations between paternalistic and participative leadership ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$), and between paternalistic and authoritarian leadership (r

= 0.24, p < 0.01). These findings suggest that while these leadership styles are conceptually distinct, they tend to co-occur in managerial practice.

Correlations with performance outcomes: Task performance demonstrates significant positive correlations with all three leadership styles. Contextual performance shows the strongest correlation with participative leadership (r = 0.41, p < 0.01), followed by paternalistic leadership (r = 0.38, p < 0.01), and a weaker correlation with authoritarian leadership (r = 0.18, p < 0.01).

Cross-cultural adaptability shows significant positive correlations with all leadership styles except authoritarian leadership (r = 0.09, ns). The strongest correlation is with participative leadership (r = 0.36, p < 0.01).

Perceived organizational support exhibits significant positive correlations with all leadership styles and both performance outcomes, consistent with organizational support theory.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 presents the results of hierarchical regression analyses testing the hypothesized direct and moderating effects. The structural equation modeling analysis demonstrates good model fit, with χ^2/df = 2.34, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06, and SRMR = 0.04, indicating that the theoretical model adequately represents the observed data.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results (Regression or Structural Equation Modeling)

Hypothesis	Path/Effects	β	SE	t-value	Result
H1a	Paternalistic Leadership → Task Performance	0.32***	0.05	6.40	Supported
H1b	Paternalistic Leadership → Contextual Performance	02.7***	0.06	4.50	Supported
H2a	Authoritarian Leadership → Task Performance	0.19***	0.05	3.80	Supported
H2b	Authoritarian Leadership → Contextual Performance	0.10	0.06	1.67	Non-Supported
H3a	Participative Leadership → Task Performance	0.28***	0.04	7.00	Supported
H3b	Participative Leadership → Contextual Performance	0.33***	0.05	6.60	Supported
H4a	CQ Paternalistic → Task Performance	0.15***	0.04	3.75	Supported
H4b	CQ Participative → Contextual Performance	0.21***	0.05	4.20	Supported
H5a	Authoritarian → Task Performance	0.12***	0.04	3.0	Supported

Note: ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. CQ = Cross-Cultural Adaptability, POS = Perceived Organizational Support*

Direct Effects (Hypotheses H1–H3):

Hypothesis H1a proposed a positive relationship between paternalistic leadership and task performance. The results support this hypothesis (β = 0.32, p < 0.001), indicating that employees who perceive their leaders as exhibiting caring and morally exemplary behaviors demonstrate higher levels of core job performance. Similarly, H1b is supported (β = 0.27, p < 0.001), suggesting that paternalistic leadership also encourages discretionary behaviors.

Hypothesis H2a proposed a positive relationship between authoritarian leadership and task performance. The findings support this hypothesis (β = 0.19, p < 0.01), indicating that directive

leadership contributes to task completion. However, H2b is not supported (β = 0.10, ns), suggesting that authoritarian leadership does not foster extra-role behaviors.

Hypotheses H3a and H3b are both supported, with participative leadership significantly predicting task performance (β = 0.28, $p < 0.001$) and contextual performance (β = 0.33, $p < 0.001$). Notably, the effect on contextual performance is stronger.

Moderating Effects (Hypotheses H4–H5):

Hypothesis H4a is supported (β = 0.15, $p < 0.01$), indicating that cross-cultural adaptability strengthens the positive effect of paternalistic leadership on task performance.

Hypothesis H4b is supported (β = 0.21, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees with greater cross-cultural competence are better able to translate participative leadership into discretionary performance behaviors.

Hypothesis H5a is supported (β = 0.12, $p < 0.05$), indicating that perceived organizational support enhances the positive effect of authoritarian leadership on task performance.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative interviews provided contextual depth to the quantitative findings. Thematic analysis revealed three primary themes:

Theme 1: Cultural Adaptation as a Facilitator

Pakistani employees with higher cross-cultural adaptability reported more positive experiences with Chinese leadership styles. One participant noted: "Understanding Chinese work culture helps me better respond to their expectations."

Theme 2: Organizational Support as a Buffer

Employees who perceived strong organizational support reported greater acceptance of authoritarian leadership practices. A respondent stated: "When we feel the company cares about us, we accept even strict instructions more willingly."

Theme 3: Participative Leadership as Motivator

Employees consistently expressed appreciation for opportunities to contribute ideas, particularly in technical matters where their expertise was valued.

Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

This study investigated the impact of Chinese leadership styles on Pakistani employees' performance, with cross-cultural adaptability and perceived organizational support as moderators. The findings reveal several important patterns.

First, all three leadership styles positively predicted task performance, but only paternalistic and participative leadership positively predicted contextual performance. Authoritarian leadership showed no significant effect on contextual performance, suggesting that directive approaches may ensure task completion but fail to inspire discretionary behaviors.

Second, cross-cultural adaptability moderated the effects of paternalistic leadership on task performance and participative leadership on contextual performance. These findings highlight cultural intelligence as a critical personal resource that enables employees to benefit more fully from supportive and participative management approaches.

Third, perceived organizational support enhanced the positive effect of authoritarian leadership on task performance, indicating that organizational support mechanisms can buffer the potential negative aspects of directive leadership.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to leadership and cross-cultural management literature.

Extension of Chinese Leadership Theory: By empirically testing Chinese leadership styles in a South Asian, Islamic cultural context, this study extends the applicability of paternalistic leadership theory beyond East Asian settings. The findings demonstrate that while authoritarian leadership is perceived strongly and effectively ensures task performance, its inability to foster contextual performance suggests cultural boundaries to its effectiveness.

Differentiated Moderating Roles: This study reveals that cross-cultural adaptability and perceived organizational support function as distinct moderators. Cultural intelligence serves as a personalized resource that enhances the effectiveness of supportive and participative approaches, while perceived

organizational support acts as a universal enhancer that bolsters directive leadership effectiveness. This differentiation advances understanding of boundary conditions in leadership effectiveness.

Integration of Individual and Organizational Factors: By simultaneously examining individual-level (cultural intelligence) and organizational-level (perceived support) moderators, this study provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding cross-cultural leadership effectiveness.

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable implications for Chinese multinational enterprises operating in Pakistan and similar cultural contexts.

Leadership Adaptation Strategies: Chinese managers should recognize that while authoritarian leadership is effective for ensuring task completion, it should be complemented with participative approaches to foster contextual performance. A balanced leadership portfolio is recommended, with situational adaptation based on task requirements and employee characteristics.

Cultural Intelligence Development: Organizations should invest in cultural intelligence training programs for both Chinese managers and Pakistani employees. The significant moderating effects of cross-cultural adaptability suggest that such investments yield tangible performance returns.

Organizational Support Mechanisms: The buffering effect of perceived organizational support on authoritarian leadership suggests that organizations should strengthen support systems, including fair compensation, career development opportunities, and recognition programs, to enhance the effectiveness of directive leadership approaches.

Human Resource Management: Selection and promotion decisions should consider cross-cultural adaptability as a valued competency. Performance management systems should recognize both task and contextual contributions, particularly in multicultural work environments.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged and addressed in future research.

Cross-Sectional Design: The cross-sectional nature of the quantitative data limits causal inference. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships and examine changes over time.

Single Industry Context: This study focused on the power generation industry, which has unique characteristics including high safety requirements and technical complexity. Future research should examine whether findings generalize to other industries such as manufacturing, services, or construction.

Single Country Context: While Pakistan provides a meaningful cultural context, findings may not generalize to other South Asian or Muslim-majority countries. Comparative studies across multiple countries would enhance generalizability.

Self-Reported Performance Measures: Although multi-source validation was employed, performance measures were primarily self-reported. Future research should incorporate objective performance metrics and supervisor ratings.

Cultural Complexity: The study measured cross-cultural adaptability as a unitary construct. Future research should examine the differential effects of CQ sub-dimensions (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, behavioral) on leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of Chinese leadership styles on Pakistani employee performance within the context of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. The findings demonstrate that paternalistic, authoritarian, and participative leadership styles all contribute to task performance, but only paternalistic and participative styles foster contextual performance. Cross-cultural adaptability enhances the effectiveness of paternalistic and participative approaches, while perceived organizational support strengthens the positive effects of authoritarian leadership.

These findings extend Chinese leadership theory into an Islamic cultural context and provide practical guidance for Chinese multinational enterprises operating in Pakistan. As the Belt and Road Initiative continues to expand, understanding cross-cultural leadership dynamics becomes increasingly critical for organizational success and international cooperation. This study contributes to that understanding by providing empirical evidence and actionable insights for managing culturally diverse workforces effectively.

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