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Master's Thesis of International Studies

Employees' Leadership Preference
in the Workplace
– A Case Study of China–

중국 직장인들의 리더십 선호: 탐색적 연구

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– A Case Study of China –

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Chinese employees' desired leadership practices that improve their performance in the workplace from the lived experiences of Chinese employees. The primary focus was on the authoritarianism and the benevolence in Chinese workplace.

This study entailed 7 semi-structured interviews of Chinese employees. The research's sample was 7 Chinese employees in food processing industry. The three research questions guiding this study included: (1) What do Chinese employees identify as desired leadership practice that increase their performance in the workplace? (2) How do benevolence dimensions of leadership affect employee performance? (3) How do the authoritarian leadership affect employee performance?

Data were recognized based on themes that emerged from the interview responses to each question, which are leadership preference, perception of power difference, perception of authoritarianism, perception of benevolence and morality, and perception of personal relationships with managers. Results of the study showed that benevolence and morality are highly related to greater performance, while authoritarianism is related to lower levels of OCBs.

The findings supported the need for leaders who work with Chinese employees to emphasize benevolence and morality over authoritarian behaviors and establish trusting relationships with their employees in an effort to positively affect employee performance. This study further demonstrated that humility was also considered as desirable leadership trait among Chinese workers.

This study adds to the field of Asian leadership, which contributes to explore Chinese employees' leadership preference as well as the understanding of the acceptance of power distance and the effects of nonwork relationship with leaders on employees' performance. These results will be useful for 21st-century leaders active in Asian context especially if they work with the current Chinese employees in the workforce.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since China's reform and opening up, due to the driving power of labor-intensive industries, the economic level of the eastern region has advanced significantly. However, with the structural shift from industry to services, labor-intensive industries in China are facing the rising labor shortages and high turnover.

Differing industry sectors required different leadership styles. Studies have supported that leadership styles can diminish the turnover rate and result in more productive organizational culture. Numerous research revealed a link between organizational-related dissatisfactions and employee turnover rates. Inadequate leadership in organizations is one of the most important organization-related factors affecting employee turnover.

Scholars have examined the effects of different leadership styles on organizational outcomes at multiple levels. To date, as a well-developed leadership theory, transformational leadership (Burn, 1978; Bass, 1985) has been studied in extensive research. However, since it derives from western culture, there was a widespread debate that leadership theories based on Western cultural values were not suitable for some cultures. Inspired by Silin (1976)'s research, researchers began to explore unique leadership in Asian workplace by identifying important Asian values.

However, even though most empirical evidence support the idea of Asian cultural context have different impact on leadership than the western, very little is known regarding indigenous leader characteristics and leadership styles in Asia, especially in China. Research on the impact of leadership on outcomes is still sparse. Thus, with the assumption that different leadership styles have varying effects on employee outcomes, and leadership does not equally suit to all industries from the perspectives of followers, this paper will conduct a case study of Chinese company in secondary industry to study employees' leadership preference in the Asian workplace.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

Question 1: What do Chinese employees identify as desired leadership practice that increase their performance in the workplace?

Question 2: How do benevolence dimensions of leadership affect employees' performance?

Question 3: How do the authoritarian leadership affect employees' performance?

Objectives

The objective of this research is to discover Chinese employees' desired leadership practices that improve their performance in the workplace and explore Chinese leadership and its impact on employee perceptions and performance.

Hypothesis

Although it has been noted that in qualitative research, hypotheses are typically a contentious issue (Robledo, 2020), it is important to note that they were necessary to develop this research. To that end, hypotheses are developed based on the previous findings:

Hypothesis – Benevolence is more effective in improving employee performance than authoritarian behavior in Chinese leadership.

Significance of the Study

In general, the important of leadership to an organization cannot be overstated. The success and effectiveness of an organization are affected by different leadership styles. According to Grant et al. (2018), "People leave their boss, not their job."¹ In any type of business, managers need to adjust their leadership style to increase the employee's engagement and job satisfaction.

However, there is often a mismatch between leadership styles held by those in positions of authority and the style of leadership that employees are willing to follow. Followers may decide whether they want to go along with their leaders if they view themselves as free agents (Kellerman, 2019). Thus, exploring how followers perceive and feel about their leaders is

¹ Grant, L. G. J. G. B. H. A. (2018). Why People Really Quiet Their Jobs. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-people-really-quit-their-jobs>

significant for the study.

In addition, Asia's unique socio-cultural contexts and philosophies breed indigenous leadership styles in the region, yet context-specific research on leader characteristics and leadership styles in Asia has been sparse.² And a few Asian studies link leader characteristics to leadership styles while Confucian values embedded in the Asian culture may have a strong effect on certain leadership styles such as benevolent leadership.³ Therefore, this study contributes to providing an explanation for the linkage between leadership practices and outcomes in Asian region (China) and offering suggestions for leadership research in contexts specific to China in the hope of shedding new light on leadership mechanisms working in the region.

² Koo, Haeyoung, and Choelsoon Park. "Foundation of Leadership in Asia: Leader Characteristics and Leadership Styles Review and Research Agenda." *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, vol. 35, no. 3, Sept. 2018, pp. 697–718. Springer Link, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-017-9548-6>.

³ Chan, S. C., & Mak, W. M. 2012. Benevolent leadership and follower performance: The mediating role of leader-member exchange (LMX). *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 29(2): 285–301.

III. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

This chapter will build the logic of this research by outlining and discussing the literatures and concepts that have been addressed throughout this work. At first, it will introduce the leadership literatures, focusing on leadership styles and outcomes. Afterward, previous researches on unique leadership in Asian workplace will be presented. Dimensions in paternalistic leadership will be considered as variables in the study. Furthermore, since the purpose of this study is to provide an explanation for the linkage between leadership practices and working performance, detailed explanation of working performance will be provided in this chapter.

Leadership Review

There is a large amount of literature on leadership. Since from the 20th century, many researchers have divided leadership literatures by the approaches they took. The major leadership research has four broad lines, according to whether the main concern is on leader traits, leader behavior, situational factors, or wholistic approach that includes them all.

In the 1980s, transformation leadership, which is broader in scope, considers interactions among the leader, the followers, the situation and the system as a whole. It represents an important step toward greater integration of leadership theory. (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985)

Transformational leadership refers to the process of changing the attitudes and of members and fostering commitment for the organization's mission and goals. According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders make efforts to raise the consciousness of followers by appealing to values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism. Bass (1985) put more emphasis on the leader's effect on subordinates. By raising followers' awareness of the importance of task outcomes, activating their higher needs and connecting their self-interest and interest of the organization, transformational leaders can effectively transform their followers in a way that followers feel trust and respect toward the leader, which motivate them to do more than they originally expected to do. Overall, transformational leadership is often considered as a shared process, involving the actions of leaders at different levels and in different subunits of an organization, not just those of the chief executive.⁴

Since 1990s, there was a widespread debate that leadership theories based on Western cultural values were not suitable for some cultures. For example, House (1995) noted that nearly all of the existing theories of leadership and the majority of the empirical data are based

⁴ Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

on North American values, which are “individualistic rather than collectivistic; emphasizing assumptions of rationality rather than ascetics, religion, or superstition; stated in terms of individual rather than group incentives, stressing follower responsibilities rather than rights; assuming hedonistic rather than altruistic motivation and assuming centrality of work and democratic value orientation.”⁵ Similarly, Smith and Peterson (1988) argued that “the particular uniqueness of the USA should alert us to the possibility that the individualistic nature of much American derived leadership theory is a facet of US culture, rather than affirm base upon which to build leadership theories of universal applicability.”⁶

In the 1960s, based on a year of observation and numerous interviews with employees at a large Taiwanese private company, Silin (1976) argued that Taiwanese business owner/managers' leadership behavioral styles were very different from those in the West in terms of moral leadership, centralized authority, social distance, keeping intentions unclear, and employing control techniques.⁷ Inspired by this research, many researchers began to explore unique leadership in Asian workplace by examining how various components of leadership differ within Asian(non-Western) cultural contexts.

Hofstede (1983) pointed out two major cultural features associated with leadership - individualism and power distance⁸, and argued that in more collectivist cultures, the relationship between the employee and employer has a moral component. It is thought to be similar to the relation of a parent to a child.⁹ The preference leadership style is also different based on two distinct culture. The ideal leader in a culture in which power distances are small would be a resourceful democrat, the ideal leader in which power distances are high is a benevolent autocrat (or "good father").¹⁰

Adler (1986) suggested that “Higher power distance cultures do not expect delegation or participation; they expect decisive, authoritarian decision makers.”¹¹ Deanne N, et al. (1999) also noted that “A less negative attitude towards authoritarian leadership will likely be found in high power distance societies. In such societies dominance and ostentatious displays of power might be appropriate for leaders.”¹²

⁵ House, R. J. (1995). *Leadership in the twenty-first century: A speculative inquiry*. Reginald H. Jones Center, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

⁶ Smith, P. and Peterson, M. (1988), *Leadership, Organizations and Culture*, Sage, Beverly Hills.

⁷ Silin, R. F. (1976). *Leadership and Values*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁸ Hofstede, G. (1983), "The Cultural Relativity of Organizational Practices and Theories", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 75-89.

⁹ Hofstede, G. (1984), "Cultural Dimensions in Management and Planning", *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 81-99.

¹⁰ Hofstede, G. and Bond, M. (1988), "The Confucius Connection: From Cultural Roots to Economic Growth", *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 16 No. 4, Spring, pp. 5-21

¹¹ Adler, N. (1986), *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, Kent, Boston.

¹² Deanne N Den Hartog and others, 'Culture Specific and Cross-Culturally Generalizable Implicit Leadership

Regarding the possible mechanism for this phenomenon, R. Takeuchi, et al. (2020) suggested that the acceptance of power/status inequality may serve as a key underlying mechanism for this cross-cultural difference.¹³ Specifically, leader authoritarianism is considered more acceptable in Asian since power distance is taken for granted in Asian contexts as opposed to Western ones. They also found out the importance of integration of work and nonwork life in Asian workplace. Moreover, Mansur et al. (2017) pointed out that integrating authoritarianism with genuine benevolence may effectively justify leaders' superior power status and, thereby, the use of more controlling leadership styles.¹⁴ Overall, evidences collectively supported the role of power and authoritarian in Asian workplace, which led to the rise of Chinese leadership research.

Paternalistic Leadership

The paternalistic leadership model is one of the Asian conceptualizations of leadership that has received increased attention (Farh & Cheng 2000). This leadership model is the most well developed, comprehensively researched, and Chinese indigenous.

Paternalistic leaders strengthen and utilize their authority to instruct employees while keeping a social distance from them. By showing benevolence and avoiding conflict among employees, they expect employee' respect and obedience. Even though it involves suppression and domination, paternalistic leadership challenges the common belief/stereotypes in the West. For example, unlike the assumptions of Western researchers that authoritarian/directive leadership and participative leadership are mutually exclusive, paternalistic leaders in Asia develop personal, caring, and open relationships where they discuss and dialogue with their employees.¹⁵

According to Leung, K., & White, S. (2004), Asian paternalistic leadership is differed from autocratic leadership mainly in three ways: not simply autocratic, emphasis on discussion between leaders and employees, and its orientation toward power.¹⁶ Specifically, paternalistic leadership is broader in scope than autocratic leadership, it involves personal relationships with employees and benevolence and concern toward employees. Paternalistic leaders are also willing to discuss and share their ideas with employees. Lastly, instead of suppression and

Theories: Are Attributes of Charismatic/Transformational Leadership Universally Endorsed?', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10.2 (1999), 219–56 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(99\)00018-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00018-1)>.

¹³ R. Takeuchi, A.C. Wang, and J.L. Farh, 'Asian Conceptualizations of Leadership: Progresses and Challenges', *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 7.1 (2020), 233–56 <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-045307>>.

¹⁴ Mansur J, Sobral F, Goldszmidt R. 2017. Shades of paternalistic leadership across cultures. *J. World Bus.* 52:702–13

¹⁵ Leung, K., & White, S. (2004). *Handbook of Asian management*.

¹⁶ Leung, K., & White, S. (2004). *Handbook of Asian management*.

domination, power is used by leaders to protect employees for moral obligation. In general, research has implicated that paternalistic leadership consists of three dimensions—authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Farh et al., 2006).

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism refers to the behavior of a leader who exerts great authority and control over followers and demands unquestioning allegiance from them. Based on the Confucian value of hierarchy, “higher ups govern, lower ranks obey”¹⁷, which means the position power leaders possess can influence employee behavior in terms of compliance and obedience. Thus, Chinese managers frequently put these values into practice by creating centralized systems and taking on a father-like role with an authoritative and direct leadership style.¹⁸ In addition, authoritarianism has been considered “effective” in Chinese workplace, especially in traditional settings. (R. Takeuchi, et al., 2020) According to Cheng and colleagues’ (2004) 26-item paternalistic leadership measure, authoritarian behaviors include “asking to obey his/her instructions completely”, “exercises strict discipline over subordinates”, and “scolds subordinates when they can’t accomplish their tasks.”

Benevolence

Benevolence refers to the behavior of showing personal and holistic concern for subordinates’ and their families’ well-being. Some typical examples are “devoting his/her energy to taking care of subordinates”, “expressing concern about subordinates’ daily life”, or “handling difficulties in everyday life for subordinates” (Cheng and colleagues’ (2004) 26-item paternalistic leadership measure)

Morality

In general, morality is defined as a leader's behavior of exhibiting superior moral character and integrity by acting selflessly and setting an example for others. Typically, paternalistic leaders take on a father-like role and protect as well as care for their staff members' professional and personal lives in exchange for their fidelity and obedience (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Niu, Wang, & Cheng (2009) claimed that Chinese employees highly respect, appreciate, and consider moral leaders who demonstrate integrity and prioritize the collective good over self-interest as ideal leaders.¹⁹ Some of the classic behaviors of moral leaders are “not taking the credit for subordinates’ achievements and contributions for himself/herself”, “not taking advantage of subordinates for personal gain”, “employing people according to their virtues and not envying others’ abilities and virtues”. (Cheng and colleagues’ (2004) 26-item paternalistic

¹⁷ Beamer, L. 1998. Bridging business cultures. *China Business Review*, May-June: 54-58.

¹⁸ Peng, M. W., Lu, Y., Shenkar, O., & Wang, D. Y. L. 2001. Treasures in the China house: A review of management and organizational research on Greater China. *Journal of Business Research*, 52: 95-110.

¹⁹ Niu, C. P., Wang, A. C., & Cheng, B. S. 2009. Effectiveness of a moral and benevolent leader: Probing the interactions of the dimensions of paternalistic leadership. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 12: 32-39.

leadership measure)

Combine the above, dimensions were identified from a literature review on conceptual frameworks of Asian leadership in terms of traits and behaviors (Table 1.)

Dimensions in Asian Leadership	
Characteristics	Behaviors
<p>⑩ Authoritarian Power distance</p>	<p>⑩ Asking subordinates to obey his/her instructions completely.</p> <p>⑩ Exercising strict discipline over subordinates.</p> <p>⑩ Scolding subordinates when they can't accomplish their tasks.</p> <p>⑩ Make subordinates feel pressured when working with him/her.</p>
<p>⑩ Benevolent Personal, caring, and open relationships with employees</p>	<p>⑩ Expressing concern about subordinates' daily life beyond work relations.</p> <p>⑩ Helping subordinates in daily life.</p> <p>⑩ Encouraging subordinates when they encounter arduous problems.</p> <p>⑩ Taking good care of subordinates' family members.</p>
<p>⑩ Moral Moral obligation</p>	<p>⑩ Employing people according to their virtues and does not envy others' abilities and virtues.</p> <p>⑩ Not taking the credit for subordinates' achievements and contributions for himself/herself.</p> <p>⑩ Not taking advantage of subordinates for personal gain.</p>

Table 1. Dimensions in Asian Leadership, made by the author. (selected from Cheng and colleagues' (2004) 26-item paternalistic leadership measure)

Basically, dimensions in Asian leadership are composed of three parts, 'authoritarian', 'benevolence', and 'morality' part. They were also often divided as 2 broad areas: authoritarian as well as benevolence and morality, which are the main areas this study will look into. Significance of them was already expressed in the research questions.

Follower Outcome

The significance of leadership styles in the success of companies has been proved in previous studies. Scholars have examined the effects of different leadership on organizational outcomes at individual, team, and firm levels in Chinese context. This review mainly organized some leadership research with the focus on follower outcomes. (followers taking-charge behavior; employee voice; exit intentions; OCB...)

For example, findings from The Chinese GLOBE Co-Country Investigator, Ping Ping Fu (1999) showed that a vision is often expressed in a non-aggressive way by Chinese leaders. One possible explanation for this is the influence of Confucian values (such as kindness and benevolence), which cause people to reject leaders who give big speeches without taking concrete action. Her work also indicate that Chinese manager often concern about nonwork domains in work life. Specifically, by interviewing Chinese managers, Ping Ping Fu (1999) shows that a Chinese manager feels highest respect to his boss because his boss concerns about his personal life (or non-work area), such as visiting his ailing mother at the hospital and even taking some of his responsibilities to reduce his workload.

Chen et al. (2014) collected data from Taiwanese conglomerate and evidenced that the positive influence of benevolence and morality dimensions of paternalistic leadership on both in-role and extra-role performance, while the authoritarian paternalistic leadership is negatively associated with subordinate performance. Their findings also showed that affective trust acts as mediator of the relationship between benevolent and moral paternalistic leadership and employee performance but has little effect on the relationship between authoritarianism and employee performance.²⁰ This indicated that in order to get positive performance, leaders should pay attention to trust relationships with their followers. However, the samples were supervisor–subordinate dyads, where common method variance may occur.

Conducting survey from 310 full-time employees in 81 work groups in China, Li, et al. (2015) proved the positive relationship between empowering leadership and followers taking-charge behavior, while the role breadth self-efficacy mediates the relationship.²¹ After collecting data from two garment manufacturing companies located in Macau and Zhuhai, results from Lam, et al. (2016) showed that the influence of ethical leadership on employee voice is mediated by cognitive engagement, which is positively correlated with supervisory ethical leadership. And employee exit intentions are inversely correlated with employee voice.²²

²⁰ Chen, Xiao-Ping, et al. "Affective Trust in Chinese Leaders: Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Employee Performance." *Journal of Management*, vol. 40, no. 3, Mar. 2014, pp. 796–819. SAGE Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311410604>.

²¹ Li, S. L., He, W., Yam, K. C., & Long, L. R. 2015. When and why empowering leadership increases followers' taking charge: A multilevel examination in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(3): 645–670.

²² Lam, L. W., Loi, R., & Chan, K. W. 2016. Voice more and stay longer: How ethical leaders influence employee voice and exit intentions. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 26(3): 277–300.

Both researches tested the follower outcomes based on survey, however, survey-based approach is clearly not the ideal way to capture the joint effects of the multiple leadership components as well as the psychological dynamics of employees.

Recently, Koo and Park (2018) conducted a comprehensive review of the existing literature with a concentration on Asian leadership. Their findings show that Asia’s unique socio-cultural contexts and philosophies breed indigenous leadership styles in the region, yet context-specific research on leader characteristics and leadership styles in Asia has been sparse²³, which calls for the need of future exploration in this field. Hence, this study will explore Asian leadership based on dimensions summarized from previous research, situational factors will be considered when conducting qualitative research.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to all the positive and productive employee acts and behaviors that don't fall under their official job descriptions. OCB includes anything an employee does voluntarily to support their coworkers and benefit the organization as a whole. Organ (1988) defines OCB as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization".²⁴ To be specific, OCB includes three essential aspects: (1) OCBs are considered as optional employee behaviors that are out of the job description. (2) OCBs go beyond what is specified and enforceable in the job description. (3) OCBs positively impact organizational effectiveness as a whole.

This paper chose OCB as dependent variable to explore the impacts of paternalistic leadership on employee attitude and performance in terms of genuine commitment to the company. Investigating OCB serves the purpose of exploring the psychological effect that paternalistic leadership induce from employees, which explicate the salient role of employees’ perceptions in paternalistic leadership. Specifically, research adopted three components of OCB in Farh, Earley, and Lin’s (1997) Chinese Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale, which are identification with company, altruism toward colleagues, and conscientiousness (Table 2.)

Chinese Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification with the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to stand up to protect the reputation of the company.

²³ Haeyoung Koo and Choelsoon Park, ‘Foundation of Leadership in Asia: Leader Characteristics and Leadership Styles Review and Research Agenda’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 35.3 (2018), 697–718 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-017-9548-6>>.

²⁴ Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational Citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eager to tell outsiders good news about the company and clarify their misunderstandings. • Makes constructive suggestions that can improve the operation of the company. • Actively attends company meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altruism toward colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to assist new colleagues to adjust to the work environment. • Willing to help colleagues solve work-related problems. • Willing to cover work assignments for colleagues when needed. • Willing to coordinate and communicate with colleagues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientiousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complies with company rules and procedures even when nobody watches and no evidence can be traced. • Takes one's job seriously and rarely makes mistakes. • Does not mind taking on new or challenging assignments. • Tries hard to self-study to increase the quality of work outputs.

Table 2. Chinese Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (selected from Farh, Earley, and Lin, 1997)

Summary

The significance of leadership styles in the success of companies has been proved in previous studies. And scholars have examined the effects of different leadership styles on organizational outcomes at multiple levels. However, given the globalization, many believe that dominating western leaderships are becoming less and less applicable in all cultures.

The discussion in the essay indicates the important Asian values such as authoritarian, power distance and benevolence. Since most empirical evidences support the idea that

leadership practices and outcomes vary in Asian contexts, this study suggests the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers in Chinese workplace while seeks to explore the impact of Asian values on Chinese leadership practices and outcomes.

The acceptance of power/status inequality and the tendency to extend influence on employees' nonwork lives by Chinese leaders have been largely supported by recent studies. However, the literature still remains inconclusive on how Chinese leaders utilize their position power and personal relationships to achieve better outcomes. Also, according to previous research, authoritarianism has been considered effective in Chinese workplace, especially in traditional settings. Thus, it is ideal for the study to explore leadership mechanisms working in the Chinese region by focusing on contexts specific to traditional industry.

By conducting context-specific research, this study contributes to providing an explanation for the linkage between leadership practices and outcomes in Asian region (China) and offering suggestions for leadership research in contexts specific to China in order to shed new light on leadership mechanisms operating in the region.

Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was conducted to investigate Chinese Employees' Leadership Preference in the Workplace.

The existing literature had largely used Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. However, the limitation of questionnaire is the susceptibility to attributional errors. Thus, Yukl, G. (1989) argued that future research should use a greater variety of methods for measuring leadership behavior and should not be limited to the narrow range of behaviors represented in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.²⁵ Similarly, Deanne N, et al. (1999) noted that the primary goal of the culture specific approach is a descriptive idiographic orientation.²⁶

Focusing on exploring ideas and developing a theory or hypothesis, qualitative research is used to gather in-depth insights on poorly understood topics by understanding concepts, beliefs or experiences. Since Asian leadership is lack of confirm theories and assumptions, the main focus of this research is exploring problems regarding indigenous leadership in Asia by understanding followers' thoughts and experiences to gain comprehensive knowledge of leadership in Asian context/culture as well as generate new ideas. The benefits of using qualitative method are flexibility, natural setting, meaningful insights and generation of new ideas.²⁷ To be specific, since data is not predetermined in advance and is gathered in naturalistic

²⁵ Yukl, Gary. "Managerial leadership: A review of theory and research." *Journal of management* 15.2 (1989): 251-289.

²⁶ Deanne N Den Hartog and others, 'Culture Specific and Cross-Culturally Generalizable Implicit Leadership Theories: Are Attributes of Charismatic/Transformational Leadership Universally Endorsed?', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10.2 (1999), 219-56 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(99\)00018-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00018-1)>.

²⁷ "What is qualitative research?" Scribbr. www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/. Accessed 21

manners, detailed descriptions of people's experiences, feelings and perceptions can be drawn from open-ended questions, which allow for the discovery of novel ideas that would not have occurred to researchers otherwise. In other words, this research method overcomes the rigidity of quantitative method, allowing researcher to modify research approach based on findings throughout the research while examining the psychological dynamics through which leaders can impact employee outcomes. Hence, present study decided to adopt this method.

The main goal of this study was to understand the employees' perception. Thus, the case study approach was selected to collect the lived experiences of Chinese employees in the workplace. It facilitates open discussion by Chinese employees on their leadership preference. According to Yin (2014), The case study design contributes to the knowledge about a phenomenon for individuals and groups and organizational and social structures.²⁸ Also, by conducting a case study, the researcher will be able to study the real-life scenarios through detailed data collection and then characterizes the results into themes.²⁹

In order to identify and collect data from Chinese's leadership preference in the workplace, interviews were conducted in the researcher's case study. According to Yin, interviews are significant sources of case study evidence. Open-ended inquiries seek to capture participants' experiences in words or images. The transcript from interviews is carefully analyzed for common themes or major phenomena and data are gathered and analyzed by grouping them into meaningful clusters. From these clusters, a pattern was identified to understand better the causes behind the acceptance of power/status inequality and the integration of work and nonwork life in Chinese context.

Population and Sample Size

This research targets the sample of Chinese employees in food processing industry. The industry was chosen in order to give an in-depth knowledge from the traditional setting. Chinese employees who worked in this industry were the participants in the interviews. The selected individuals interviewed in this study assisted the researcher to understand the context behind Chinese workers' experiences.

The researcher contacted participants within companies located in China after defining the selection criteria. The employee sizes of the firms ranged from 50 to 500 individuals, representing a wide range of that industry. Also, participants involved in this study would: (a) have Chinese nationality, (b) have been employed with company for a minimum six months and (c) held positions below the supervisor. In a qualitative study, Creswell (2007)

September 2022.

²⁸Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage.

²⁹Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage

recommended having 5 to 25 participants. For this study, 7 participants were identified as Chinese employees who met the criteria.

At the initial stage of selecting random participants, the researcher reached out her networks on social media to look for people who met the requirements of Chinese employees who have been employed with a company for a minimum six months. Once the required number of participants (7) had been attained, with two more people serving as backups, email addresses were gathered and requests to interview were sent out to obtain permission for the interview (Appendix A). Following permission, the researcher sent emails to the participants outlining the study's goals, methodology, and expected time commitment from the participants. The study's voluntary nature was emphasized in the email invitation. They were free to withdraw their consent at any time without facing any consequences or reprisals. Furthermore, the participants received the assurance that all answers provided during the interviews would be kept confidential and solely for the purpose of understanding their experience as Asian workers. Potential volunteers were given the researcher's contact information for further information about the study. The researcher used criteria sampling once people responded and expressed interest in taking part in the study to make sure that the candidates could speak to the issue being studied.

Setting

The setting refers to the chosen location from which data will be retrieved (Yin, 2016). Interviews were conducted using Voov meeting as the primary tool. Due to the time and location differences between the participants, the participant had the option of choosing the location for the interview to ensure their comfort and convenience. The precise location and hour were decided before the interview.

Since they were provided the opportunity to choose the interview location, participants may feel more at ease, which could lead to more honest answers to the interview questions. Open dialogue can improve the chances of finding solutions to promote employees' performance, which can benefit both the study and employers in Asian context. Recording of the interviews were conducted to preserve the accuracy of participants' responses (Creswell, 2013). During the entire interview, all research participants were informed and requested permission of audio recording. (Appendix A)

Analysis of Research Questions

The significant goal of developing research questions is to explore or examine data based on theories. Research questions provide guide for how the study should be approached and collect relevant data across study areas to assist further research. Leading methods in qualitative

research include interviews and observations.

The following prerequisites must be met before semi-structured interviews are conducted: the interviewer must have prior knowledge of the research topic; the questions must be predetermined and formulated in an interview guide covering the main topics of the research; the questions must be focused, but not strictly so as to limit the participants' freedom of speech; and the questions must be formulated in an interview guide (Kallio, 2016). Therefore, following an extensive literature review, the topics to be investigated were chosen (Table 3).

Structure of the interview	
Participant profile	Gender, age, occupation, length of employment, industry.
Leadership preference	Desired leadership practices that increase their engagement in the workplace.
Perception of power difference	Opinions and attitudes towards power inequality in the workplace, if they feel that way.
Perception of authoritarianism	Opinions and attitudes towards authoritarianism in the workplace, if they feel that way.
Perception of benevolence and morality	Opinions and attitudes towards benevolence and morality during the work.
Perception of personal relationships with managers	Experience of non-work relationships with their managers. Opinions and attitudes towards non-work relationships with their managers.

Table 3. Structure of the interview, made by the author.

Exploring employees' Leadership Preference among this sample could contribute to provide new insights into Asian leadership as well as open up new directions for future research.

Data Collection

This section describes the data collection process. It entails the protocols used to direct the study, the interview setting and process, as well as the procedural steps used for coding the data and developing themes.

The researcher raised the interview questions for the purpose of data collection for this study. Interview protocol and interview questions (see Appendix A and B) were developed prior to the interviews. The online formulary (Appendix A) was created using “问卷星” (<https://www.wjx.cn/>) to give a general overview and purpose of the interview while asking for volunteers to participate and collect their basic profile and contact information. After carefully

crafting the interview questions and interview protocol, the questions were field-tested with two volunteer practitioners to identify errors and make adjustments, which helped to improve wording of the questions and identify ambiguities.³⁰

Prior to the formal interview process, the researcher acquired participants' informed consent. According to Yin (2014), providing all subjects with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study prior to obtaining voluntary consent is essential when research involves human beings. The option to withdraw from the study at any time was given to all participants. The researcher gave each participant the assurance that any identifiable information would be kept confidential.

After negotiating with the participants, the researcher scheduled interviews that were least intrusive to them. Prior to the interviews, all participants were offered an explanation of the study (see Appendix A). Each participant participated in the interview conducted by the researcher using videoconferencing software.

Seventeen semi-structured interview questions and a protocol instrument were created by the researcher. Before recording, the researcher went over the study's purpose and outlines of the interview, then reiterated to the participants that their identities, as well as the identities of their companies and employers, would remain confidential. After being given consent of participants, the researcher started recording the interviews while asking open-ended questions. According to Creswell (2009), open-ended questions allow for participants to express their opinions without being constrained by the researcher or the research findings.³¹ Moreover, follow-up questions were used to clarify and confirm details throughout the interviews.³² In order to improve confidentiality, the researcher assigned numerical codes for each principal during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

This research applies a thematic analysis, which involves examining, organizing, coding, forming themes, and analyzing evidence for the purpose of producing empirical findings.³³ This method was chosen for its flexibility as well as its capacity to distinguish experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set.

This research employed the “six-step framework” of Braun & Clarke (2006): familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and

³⁰ Noor, K. B. M. (2008). Case study: A strategic research methodology. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5(11), 1602–1604.

³¹ Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

³² Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.

³³ Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

writing up. The purpose of thematic analysis is to look for meaningful patterns and details across the data.

Six-step process:

Step 1: Familiarization

Becoming familiar with the data before coding, which includes transcribing the interview, rereading the transcriptions, getting an overview of its context, and making notes if necessary.

Step 2: Coding

This includes highlighting or organizing certain words or phrases in the data that collectively indicates something and arranging them in a meaningful way. According to Creswell (2018), the coding was determined by analyzing memos, keywords, and phrases. This process will be helpful to grab the essence of the data.

Step 3: Generating themes

Generating themes out of collected data. Several codes indicating the same expressions can be found among themes, which will give a cue of codes that are used repeatedly. In this case, researcher can identify the useless ones and discard them.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

Contrasting the themes with original data to identify any gaps or irrelevant findings. After tracing themes back to the data, researcher may modify them based on how well they fulfill and support the data.

Step 5: Defining themes

Naming the themes based on what they represent and what we learn about the data from them.

Step 6: Writing

After describing, categorizing, and interpreting the data into codes and themes, establishing links between the variables and the clustered data. Then visualizing the major findings and the conclusions from thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Research participants were informed of the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research. An Informed Consent Form was given to each participant to confirm that they were all authorized to participate. Participants of this study were made aware of their freedom to refuse participation at any time and for any reason, without concern about repercussions or victimization.

In respect for anonymity and confidentiality, the identity of research participants was protected at all times. Respondents' personal information was kept in a way that avoids individuals to be identified to or by a third party. Any confidential personal information (such as names, jobs, employers, etc.) was securely stored and password protected. Only the

researcher has access to this information. All study materials will be sterilized or destroyed after the completion of the study. This study followed all IRB regulations to ensure the safety of every participant. Also, the research study complied with the ethical standards of Seoul National University.

IV. ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research study was to explore Chinese employees' leadership preference in the workplace from the lived experiences of Chinese employees working in food processing industry. Understanding the reasons behind the acceptance of power/status inequality in China along with understanding the effects of nonwork social relations may offer suggestions for leadership research in Asian context as well as shedding new light on management practices at work in the region.

Chapter IV is a compilation of the results from Voov interviews with Chinese employees that were presently residing in China. The results of the study, which are based on participant responses to the seven interview questions, are provided. The important conclusions and themes drawn from the data analysis are also given. Lastly, the summary of the findings wraps up this section.

Samples

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study in order to get more insightful information. Four or five participants are the recommended sample size for case study designs so that there is enough information to identify themes within and across cases.³⁴ Also, forming the criteria for participant selection is essential for qualitative study because it can acquire perspectives on behaviors within specific cultures.³⁵

The sampling for this study was as follows: 1. Participants were of Chinese. 2. Participants were employed with the company for a minimum six months. 3. Participants held positions below the supervisor.

A total of 7 Chinese employees were chosen as the sample size and completed the interview process. Table 4 illustrates the demographics of the participants like gender, age, and tenure.

Demographics	
	Number of Participants
Total	7
Gender	
Male	5
Female	2
Age	
20-24	1
25-29	1

³⁴ Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

³⁵ Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

30-34	1
35-40	4
Tenure	
0.5-1Y	1
1-2Y	1
2-3Y	1
>3Y	4

Table 4. Summary of participants, made by the author.

To keep the privacy and anonymity of the participants, in this research, the participants are identified by numbers, which will be used every time they are mentioned or referred.

Findings and Results

For this study, the participants answered interview questions to identify Chinese employees' desired leadership practices that motivate them in the workplace. Data were reorganized based on themes that emerged from the interviewees' responses to each question. Five themes were revealed during the interviews, some of the which recurred in each interview question. The themes included: leadership preference, perception of power difference, perception of authoritarianism, perception of benevolence and morality, and perception of personal relationships with managers.

The following sections describe the participants' responses to the themes and subthemes related to Interview Questions.

Leadership preference

First theme related to desired leadership practices in the workplace based on their experiences, which can give a general view on desired leadership practices according to participants' experience in terms of leaders' traits and behaviors.

The following excerpts from the data reveal the theme:

Participant 1: *He is more responsible. When you work with him, the communication is smoother and the work is smoother. He explained many things clearly, which may help you remove many obstacles in terms of implementation. In terms of previous cases, he may communicate with you and tell you how to do it more conveniently [...] maybe it [the work] will be carried out more smoothly.*

Participant 2: *I like encourage, the way a parent encourages a child. That is, I can give you instructions, and I encourage you to do it. As for the result, whether it is good or bad, he will encourage you to actively participate and complete it seriously, instead of criticizing or punishing you if you do not do well. [...] For example, if the leader gives instructions to you to make a contract or cooperate with the customer, you will think about*

[...] and whether the leader is satisfied with the terms of the contract.

Participant 5: *A family must depend on the parents. A good parent can play a leading role. A team must depend on the leader. An excellent leader is vigorous, capable, and professional, and can guide any member of the team to do some specific things. Only one can help his subordinates grow can he be called excellent leaders.*

Participant 6: *For example, if we have any orders, and we don't understand anything, we may just ask him. If there is something unclear, you may ask him, and he will explain it to us patiently. This is my favorite.*

Participant 7: *in my current unit, the manager will teach you some things hand in hand, that is to say, he will impart a lot of experience to you. It doesn't matter whether you want to learn or not, he will teach you, and then pass on some of his personal experience to you. This is what I like, because, you should learn as much as you can.*

Five out of 7 participants expressed their preference to benevolence leadership. Participant 1 preferred “responsible” and supportive leader who “remove obstacles” during the work. Participant 2 explained that leadership as “the way a parent encourages a child”, which means she considered the manager as a parent, acknowledged the power of manager while hoped for the support and approval of her manager. Also, she expressed resentment of authoritarian leadership in terms of “criticize and punishment”. As for Participant 5, he made a metaphor of a family, comparing the company as family, and the leader as parent. According to his respond, he mentioned the desired traits of leader were “vigorous, capable, and professional” and that leader had obligation to help subordinates to grow. Also, Participant 6 and Participant 7 expressed the need for guidance of manager during the work. Overall, all of them prefer leaders who express benevolence in a way of encouragement, support, guidance, and even cultivation.

Two participants expressed the preference of directive leadership:

Participant 3: *My favorite is the kind that gives orders directly, that is to say, within your ability, you give me orders directly, and then I will execute them, and don't tell me about some other things.*

Participant 4: *Give instructions directly [...] I think he has a very good and general direction. After the direction is determined, he will inform me of his direction and ideas, and I will work hard to realize our common goals in various ways according to his directions. [...] Of course, during the process, I will also communicate with the managers about these things. But there are some things that are not necessary, and you[manager] don't need to be like parents. [...] but at the end, I must achieve the outcome we decided.*

Participants 4 mentioned “direction” of the leader, which refers to the orientation or goal of the work that managers gave to the employee. This means that he believed in his managers and willing to return by his “hard work”. Both of them prefer not to be given guidance all the time. As for the reason, **Participant 3** explained:

Because I know that I have a clear goal, so if I have finished these [...], then I don't have

asked how do they think of power inequality in workplace, the following were expressed:

Participant 1: *The power of superiors and subordinates itself is unequal, because power equals to service. The power possessed by leaders is extensive, while the power possessed by employees is narrow, and the power inequality is certain.*

Participant 2: *Like a leader, he must have more power than the employees. That is to say, if there is work, he directly arranges it for you, and you still have to do it. Even if you feel stressed or something.*

Participant 4: *This kind of inequality must exist, because as a manager, he may consider things more carefully than ordinary employees. Moreover, what he considers involves a wide range of aspects. So, I think it is normal that this kind of inequality exists. The higher the position of him, the greater the pressure he has. So how to balance between this kind of inequality or equality must be discussed by both parties. As an employee, you need to do your job well.*

Participant 5: *The leader must be different from the subordinates in terms of position level, but an excellent leader will eliminate the line between him and the subordinates. He will actively devote himself to the subordinates, become better friends with the subordinates, and urge the team to bond together. Do work together that is beneficial to the enterprise, and even solve the problems in the lives of employees.*

Participant 7: *I don't think there is so-called power inequality, that is, everyone in this company, you do what you should do in your position, and I do what I should do in my position. The difference of superiors and subordinates is just that our respective duties are different and our demands are also different. You are my supervisor, so, you need me to cooperate with you to do something, I just do it. But don't force me on other things.*

Words like “certain”, “must”, “normal” indicates that participants are generally accept power difference in workplace. Ashkanasy affirmed that in culture (Confucian Asia) values power distance and practices relatively high levels of societal collectivism, a leader is trusted to get on with the job on behalf of (usually) his subordinates.³⁶ Previous research has indicated that hierarchy (or power distance) is equal to responsibility (or moral obligation). (R. Takeuchi, et al., 2020; Ashkanasy) Congruently, Participant 1 indicated, “Power equals to service.” Participant 4 conveyed a similar sentiment, “The higher the position of him, the greater the pressure he has.” These evidences convinced that the position power leaders possess can automatically induce employees’ compliance and obedience, that is, “higher ups govern, lower ranks obey”³⁷. The explanation of the situation is that employees consider “power” as “service”, “stress”, and “duty”, which justify the power inequality between leaders and subordinates. Also, statement like “he may consider things more carefully than ordinary employees.” (Participant

³⁶ Neal M Ashkanasy, ‘LEADERSHIP IN THE ASIAN CENTURY: LESSONS FROM GLOBE’, 5.2, 14.

³⁷ Beamer, L. 1998. Bridging business cultures. China Business Review, May-June: 54-58.

4) shows employees' faith in their leaders in terms of their competence.

Besides, **Participant 6** gave a detailed explanation about power difference in her workplace:

If we have an idea, we may tell the leader, the leader above us, the team leader. Above us is the team leader, and above the team leader is the manager. Above The manager is the company's boss, and the ideas should be conveyed step by step. If we have any suggestion, for example, if I am working in, such as the configuration part, if there is anything that needs to be improved or something, we will directly report to the team leader, and then the team leader will report to the above. [...] We just can't leapfrog. I have to go through the person who manages me, and then he can report it to the above.

When asked how does she feel about that, she shared an experience of her:

For example, when I was working, I discovered a problem. Then I told the person who directly managed me at the time. But he may have a lot of things to do. Because he doesn't just manage us, he has other things to do, so maybe he forgets. One day when the big boss of the company came down, he checks us from time to time [...] to see the status of our work, just to inspect. [...] the leader came in and asked me, is there anything need to improve? Then I gave my opinion, I didn't think too much at the time. In fact, how should I put it, according to the company's regulations, it is not allowed to tell the boss directly. To them, I have leapfrogged, and then he [team leader] seems a little unhappy. In fact, I understand, because if you directly talk to the big boss above, but you don't talk to...the person who directly manages you and reports to him, he must feel a little unhappy... How to say this, it may be an oversight on my part.

Even though she did not make any mistake technically, as to her manager's attitude, she expressed understanding, and thought that this is her "oversight" to "leapfrog". All responds prove that the power inequality is widely accepted in Chinese workplace.

Perception of authoritarianism

Most of the participants hold negative attitudes towards authoritarianism. However, no matter they liked it or not, they still hold the obligation to obey their leaders. The following excerpts from the data reveal the theme:

Participant 1: *He is more authoritarian style, and basically if there is anything, he will directly issue orders, asking you to do it and when you have to do it. For example, we have already got off work after six o'clock, but at eight o'clock in the evening, he will call us immediately if he has something to do, and ask us to complete it immediately. [...] Every time when we have completed our work tasks for the day and we want to leave work on time, he will come to our office at this time to check, just to see which employee is not at his or her desk, or which employee leave early. And just assume that this employee may not have enough workload on his or her own, and then at the meeting the next day, he will*

communicate with this employee in front of us, asking whether your workload is not enough, and then If you need to assign other work tasks to you.

Participant 2: *I think that sometimes the instructions given by the manager may be contrary to the ideas of the employee, but the employees must follow the instructions given by the manager no matter what.*

Participant 3: *He wants to fire someone, but [...] he didn't tell him, instead, he asked me to me to talk to that person. [...] He just simply told you about the task, he didn't even know if you had done it before, and he didn't tell you how to do it, he didn't ask you, and then when you put in a lot of effort to finish the task and when you hand it over to him, he will blatantly accuse you of these and those mistakes. That's [...] If employee doesn't know it, why don't you [manager] teach him in advance? Instead, after a lot of hard work and handed it over to him, and he just trample on their achievements. [...] When the work is not very busy, he just asks us to clean it, that is to say, to clean up those pipes and so on. It should be clean enough to be used as a mirror, or you cannot get off work.*

Participant 4: *He likes to go in the way he wants. He will intervene in every area. However, in the end, I was able to complete the project satisfactorily.*

Participant 5: *For example, some time ago, I felt that [...] no matter what I did, my manager was always dissatisfied with me. How to put it, on the one hand, he may be dissatisfied with me because he thinks that I am not doing well enough, which makes him dissatisfied. On the other hand, it may also mean that he did not have an effective communication with me, and then I did not understand how the work was done, so that what I did was different from the what he wanted. Ineffective communication leads to a decline in work efficiency.*

Participant 6: *I wondered why you [manager] often let him do easy work and let yourself do hard and tiring work.*

Participant 7: *When the production task is heavy, that is to say, when you are tired, and want to ask for a leave or something, sometimes he will directly refuse and not allow you to ask for leave.*

Also, **Participant 7** gave an indirect experience by his friends:

She [friends' boss] always likes to use a chicken feather as an arrow [Chinese slang, means misusing authority], and she doesn't know who she is just because he has a little power. For example, they usually rest on Saturdays and Sundays, but their manager doesn't let them rest, she insists on rushing to work, just for gaining recognition from her boss. [...] Is it appropriate to let them work? If you the outcome belongs to everyone, then it is okay, but in the end, you just swallow it all by yourself, and the employees will inevitably unhappy. So, they [his friends] both told me that during their work on weekends, they feel very uncomfortable and unhappy, and then they complain about it. [...] all we [his friends] do is to provide convenience for our leader, why does she always make trouble

for us? These things can obviously be done within working hours, why does she have to occupy our rest time? And what they done is also belongs to her.

Participant 7 sounded angry when he was talking about his friends' experience. Just like his friends, he also expressed resentment toward authoritarian leadership and thought it is inappropriate. Most of the participants expressed their resentment towards authoritarian leadership. By exerting merely authoritarian leadership in ways of strictly demanding employees obey his/her instructions, taking advantage of employees, and punishment, participants expressed feelings of “disagree”, “resistance”, “imbalance”, “pressure”, “uncomfortable”, “dire”, “depressed”. (Table 5.)

Participant	Attitude	Perception of authoritarianism
1	Negative	<i>I think this will cause employees to <u>disagree</u> with his leadership style. Another point is that employees will have a feeling of <u>resistance</u> in their hearts.</i>
2	Negative	<i>However, the <u>imbalance</u> in the hearts of the employees, I think it is still up to them to find a way to relief themselves in their daily life.</i>
3	Negative	<i>It is <u>not appropriate</u>... I feel <u>pressure</u> [...] sometimes I felt that he was just <u>looking for trouble</u> [...] You [manager] are just looking for trouble, picking the bones in the egg, and then let me bear the responsibility in the end, which makes me <u>very uncomfortable</u>.</i>
4	Negative	<i>I feel that the project did not follow my thought, which made me feel a little <u>restrained</u>.</i>
5	Negative	<i>I feel that this is <u>not conducive</u> to my work [...] We just follow the leader's wishes in the entire process of work without distinguishing right from wrong. The results are <u>dire</u>, sometimes [...] In the end, all the enthusiasm and advantages of the employee will be completely buried. We are just roundworms in the leader's belly, so this is the biggest leadership behavior that <u>buries</u> employees.</i>
6	Negative	<i>I felt a little <u>uncomfortable</u> at that time.</i>
7	Negative	<i>Anyway, I feel pretty <u>depressed</u> [...]</i>

Table 5. Perception of authoritarianism, made by the author.

This result contrasts with Deanne N, et al. (1999), who states that “A less negative attitude towards authoritarian leadership will likely be found in high power distance societies.”³⁸

³⁸ Deanne N Den Hartog and others, ‘Culture Specific and Cross-Culturally Generalizable Implicit Leadership

Evidence shows that authoritarian leadership triggers negative emotions in employees and is therefore unlikely to induce the positive feelings that are at the core of genuine commitment and dedication by employees. However, statement like “employees must follow the instructions given by the manager no matter what.” (Participant 2) proved that “even though they experience negative emotions under authoritarian leadership, their trust level to the leader remains intact.”³⁹ The other factors that justify the authoritarianism revealed from the following:

Participant 4: *I personally think it has two sides. Autocratic leader cannot say he is good or bad. If his direction is correct, I think he should be more authoritarian, so that it will achieve a very good outcome. But if he is not competent and he is still autocratic, this will not only bring a lot of trouble to the work, but also cause great problems for the entire enterprise or the development of employees. So, I think this matter can be viewed from both sides.*

Participant 6: *Maybe he just wants to cultivate you and let you exercise more. [...] Like manager, he must know more than us, right? Because I come to this company less than he do. As for the manager, he has been here for a long time, and he knows some things about this company better, that is to say, we still need to learn from him.*

Participant 7: *But this is inevitable, and it will be negligible, because after all, as long as you are on the job for one day, you must do your own things well. [...] Well, as long as the command are not particularly excessive, generally speaking, whatever the manager arranges, you still have to do your best to implement it. After all, there is a certain relationship between superiors and subordinates. Why can he be your leader? It's because he has... he has better knowledge than you, or better ability. So, you still have to follow some of his suggestions and some of his orders.*

Employees may support the autocratic leaders if they have “great direction” (Participant 4). Similarly, Participant 6 and 7 mentioned the “knowledge” and “ability” of their managers, which means competence of leaders can justify their authoritarianism by gaining the trust of employees. In addition, Participant 7 mentioned the respective duty of managers and employees. Due to the acceptance of power difference, employees recognize the different duties of leaders and themselves. To be specific, they consider their duties as “follow the leaders”. However, since the reason behind their obedience toward authoritarian leadership lies in culture-based value system (the acceptance of power difference) and competence recognition, authoritarian leadership may reduce employees’ performance. Therefore, it is conceivable that employees will become less intrinsically motivated to go above and beyond their job descriptions if the leader shows more authoritarianism.

Theories: Are Attributes of Charismatic/Transformational Leadership Universally Endorsed?, The Leadership Quarterly, 10.2 (1999), 219–56 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(99\)00018-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00018-1)>.

³⁹ Chen, Xiao-Ping, et al. “Affective Trust in Chinese Leaders: Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Employee Performance.” *Journal of Management*, vol. 40, no. 3, Mar. 2014, pp. 796–819. SAGE Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311410604>.

Perception of benevolence and morality

The theme explored benevolence and morality components in leaders' behaviors during the work. Four out of 7 participants shared their experience of perceiving benevolence of their leaders during their work:

Participant 2: *It was really busy during the epidemic. How should I put it, I don't even have time to drink, and I don't even have time to go to the toilet. [...] Yes, I was very tired at that time, but the manager is also very nice. It was night shift, so you were hungry at night. [...] and he hired an aunt [cook]. At that time, aunts also worked night shifts. She made dumpling and noodles. [...] after he sending a message that we can come out to eat, then we would come out and eat. He also would buy milk, bread and eggs. [...]*

Participant 4: *In the past, there was only one bathroom in the whole company, which was very inconvenient. After we raised it with the manager, he immediately reported it to the boss. I remember that the repairman spent several months in our company to build a toilet.*

Participant 6 shared 2 experiences of hers:

(1):

Our manager. He is very responsible for his work. No matter at work or outside of work, if it is about us, he will do his best. Let's say for example, once during the morning meeting, an employee fainted suddenly, it was hypoglycemia. After that incident, he would think that some employees didn't have time to eat breakfast. Since then, there is a cabinet in our eating place, and he will prepare something to eat, such as the Snickers bar [...]

(2):

We need to raise our salary once a year, but the previous manager, he didn't apply for these things for us. And now, after this manager came, he applied for this to the boss, and the boss agreed. So, every full year of work, our salary can be increased.

By devoting energy to taking care of employees in ways of concerning their health conditions, meeting their needs, and protecting their benefits during work, their leaders showed **benevolence** to their subordinates. Sometimes, leaders would **integrate benevolence with authoritarianism** to get better outcome:

Participant 6: *At work, he is more serious and responsible. [...] Because we operate the machine, and when the machine is operating, we can't touch it casually, so as not to hurt yourself. During the work, he will often remind us that safety is the most important thing. Then he will also tell us what we make must be good, that is to say, there must be no mistakes. You can't make mistakes, you can't make mistakes at all, he will often tell us.*

Participant 7: *[...] When one person asks for leave, everyone else follows suit. Then I feel that he is a natural leader, because when he encounters such a situation, he will not speak nicely to you, and he will be very decisive. At that time, I remembered that he said 'if you want to ask for leave, then you can ask for leave, and I will approve it for you, and I will*

approve it for you directly for a week, and you can just stay at home for a week.' His tone was very harsh at that time, and because he usually gave us a feeling that he was an easy-going person. So, when he suddenly changed his attitude, we were all frightened, all of us couldn't get used to it. Afterwards, we just, uh, didn't talk, and didn't dare to talk anymore. But in the end, he started that kind of reassuring policy again, and he told us that he would go to the leader of the county to communicate, let us finish the existing work, and then let us go.

Also, **moral** behaviors of some leaders were detected during the interviews:

Participant 2: *in our company, many seniors will sacrifice a lot of their time to help us verify or test our own results. [...] they often sacrifice their time to help us check our loopholes during the process.*

Participant 6: *I have heard that [...] We didn't know at the time, we only found out later, that in order to. [...] Because we worked very hard that month. The work is very hard, and then the company's profits are not bad, so the manager suggested to give bonuses to employees. He and the boss seemed to be a little unhappy because they had an quarrel in the office. The aunt [sweeper] heard it. We didn't know until she [sweeper] told us.*

Participants all showed their respect, gratitude and concern towards leaders' selfless and sincere motives. The perceptions of benevolence and morality are summarized in the following:

Participant	Perception of benevolence
2	<i>I won't complain, you know? [...] To be honest, <u>I was very happy</u>. [...] He thinks of every detail. Although we felt tired, after got off work, seeing these stuffs prepared for us by him, we actually <u>felt really warm</u>.</i>
4	<i>We were very <u>happy</u>. [...] I think he takes our opinions seriously.</i>
6	<i>I think he is very <u>attentive</u>. [...] He is <u>for the sake of his employees</u>, so basically the employees are quite <u>obedient</u> to him. Just say uh, no matter what it is, even if it is something that has nothing to do with work, <u>he will do it for us seriously</u>. This manager is <u>thinking about us employees</u>.</i>
	Perception of benevolence × authoritarianism
6	<i>At that time, we were more active in our work, that is to say, [...] <u>Try to be sure not to make a mistake, a lapse or something</u>.</i>
7	<i>That's... a typical hit with a stick and give a date [carrot after stick]. But everyone is quite <u>convinced</u>, I have to say. [...] I really <u>respect</u> him.</i>
	Perception of morality
2	<i>In my heart, I really want to say [for his manager] that <u>don't be too tired</u>. You [manager] <u>don't need to testify our work in your private time, just do it during working hours</u>. In private time, I hope that we can have some other activities and exchanges together to promote our relationship.</i>
6	<i>We really <u>thank</u> the manager. Although he quarreled with the boss, the</i>

	<p><i>boss still gave us bonuses. [...] The manager will <u>fight for benefits for us</u>, and he will fight for the benefits that should be fought for. Doesn't matter you're the boss or what. Some people may not quarrel with the boss [...] But this manager won't, he will say it is <u>all for his own employees</u>. He wants his employees to be <u>motivated to work</u>, right?</i></p>
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Table 6. Perception of benevolence and morality, made by the author.

Apparently, participants held positive attitudes, warm feelings and gratitude toward the leader when the leader concerns for their job-related and personal well-being. In addition, integrating authoritarian and benevolence can be an effective way to improve subordinates' performance by gaining respect from them. And this will lead to their obedience and **Conscientiousness** (Participant 6). Distinct from mere authoritarian, adding benevolence into authoritarian can significantly justify leaders' authoritarian behavior. Differ from mere negative attitudes towards authoritarian leadership (as noted before), integrating authoritarian with benevolence intrigue employees' respect and compliance. This can be explained by the father-like role of Asian leaders. By showing authority as well as benevolence like a "father", Asian leader expect employees' genuine trust and thus commitment. Similarly, moral leadership behaviors can induce positive emotions in employees that provide the foundation of positive personal bonds with their leaders. Specifically, employees willingly reciprocate the protection and care of their leaders with conformity. And this is expressed as followings:

Participant 6: *At that time (when I was very busy), I worked very hard [...] Maybe I didn't think too much about it, because at that time, [...] (the company's product) was selling very well. [...] We had been producing those two products at the time. From morning to night [...] I work in shifts, but I didn't feel sleepy at night. I may work until eight o'clock in the morning. However, I was thinking how come it's eight o'clock so quickly? I feel that it's not enough. [...] I was always motivated.*

Also, she explained:

It doesn't matter if you are a little tired, whatever you do is mutual, that is, the leader thinks of the employees, and the employees also think of the leader.

The word "mutual" implies the emotional bond and reciprocate relationship between employee and the leader. The responds shows that she reciprocated her leader's benevolence and morality with her **conscientiousness**.

Perception of personal relationships with managers

The theme explored non-work relationships between employees and their managers as well as the way they interact outside of work. The purpose of this theme is to detect benevolence and morality leaders' behaviors outside of their formal work. Upon analysis of the transcripts, it was found out that six of the 7 participants have nonwork relationship with their leaders. Most

of them are in the form of “tuan jian” (team building), which refer to after-work bonding activities with team members (include managers), the following excerpts from the data reveal the theme:

Participant 1: *We have internal team buildings with other employees, like having dinner together, [...]*

Participant 2: *He is very approachable in our daily life [...] our daily contact is also good and harmonious [...] Outside of work, during times like holidays, we usually have parties with other employees, and we have dinner together and so on. [...]*

Participant 4: *We often have team buildings. Our leaders preferred this kind of team building, and of course they cared about their families. For example, [...] in the past, we even held a tour with family members together.*

Participant 5: *He occasionally organized some activities outside of work. We belong to the regional manager. He may organize some gatherings with family members, which may invisibly make your family feel superior, [...] It may be in the form of family dinners during small holidays. Then usually when a colleague has difficulties at home, he will call other colleagues to help this colleague.*

Participant 6: *We have team building almost twice a year.*

Participant 7: *My manager and I often communicate in private [...] We often have dinner and drink together, sometimes he can go on and on for 3 hours [...] He always calls me to come to his home and have conversation. [...]*

In general, except Participant 7, the way participants interact with their leaders outside of the work is “team building”, which refers to activities with all the employees in forms of dinners, parties, or trips. The purpose of team building is bonding and connecting the team together for the development of businesses or organizations. Differ from one-on-one interaction, activities during team building intend to improve cohesion of the team instead of personal bond between employees and leaders. However, even though team building is more of a many-to-many interactions, during various activities, leaders would express personal concern about each employee. For example, leaders may organize some activities with employees’ families (Participant 4, 5) and unite employees to help each other when one has difficulties (Participant 5). This finding consistence with statement “it is not uncommon for leaders in Eastern-oriented cultures to know their employees’ financial situations and to help out with their own personal resources when necessary.”⁴⁰ By asking the feelings and effects of these activities and interactions on their working relationships with leaders, the following were expressed:

Participant	Attitudes	Perception of personal relationships with managers
1	Positive	<i>It could strengthen my communication and exchange with</i>

⁴⁰ Chen, Y., Friedman, R., Yu, E., Fang, W., & Lu, X. 2009. Supervisor–subordinate Guanxi: Developing a three-dimensional model and scale. *Management and Organization Review*, 5: 375-400.

		<i>other employees [...] I think it <u>made me trust my leader more and my leader trust me more.</u> [...] we had dinner together, and he was very impressed with me. Then, he let me participate in the records of our department's meetings, and the summary PPT of the work of the department. I think he trusts me very much. In addition, he will also give me some encouragement in private, and will also <u>give me many challenges and opportunities to try to accept new tasks.</u></i>
2	Positive	<i>There is <u>not too much the sense of distance</u> between him and us employees. [...] I don't feel too much distance between me and him. I won't say that he is my manager, so I should flatter or something. Maybe I feel more <u>harmonious</u> when we get along.</i>
4	Positive	<i>In this process [team building], everyone can <u>get to know each other better.</u> The manager <u>understands the situation of employees as well as their families.</u> In this case, it will make us <u>feel warm</u> and have more <u>sense of belonging.</u> [...] This kind of team building is very <u>necessary.</u></i>
5	Positive	<i><u>the cohesion of this team is getting stronger and stronger.</u> [...] We have all become inseparable friends in life and work. [...] That sure helps. The best corporate culture does not refer to the slogans you shout, but should <u>stimulate the kindness of each employee,</u> so that the soul of this team can last forever.</i>
6	Positive	<i>The purpose of team building is to <u>enhance the relationship between colleagues, or between colleagues and manager.</u> It <u>feels different.</u> [...] No matter what, it might be different at work and out of work. Just to get to know each other better.</i>
7	Positive	<i>Anyway, the result is that I can <u>be more dedicated</u> and <u>serve him wholeheartedly,</u> I feel that <u>he treats me very well.</u> <u>So, uh, I should dedicate more to him.</u> <u>It's just that he didn't regard me as an outsider.</u></i>

Table 7. Perception of personal relationships with managers, made by the author.

Differ from Western-oriented cultures, where followers would perceive their leaders' involvement in their personal lives as a violation of privacy (Chua et al., 2008), relative positive feelings were expressed during the interviews. All participants found non-work relationships

with managers helpful in terms of creating opportunities for own career development (Participant 1), creating a more harmonious environment (Participant 2), having more sense of belonging (Participant 4), and boosting relationships between colleagues and (Participant 1, 4, 5, 6). Thus, the impacts of team building were mostly shown in “**Altruism toward colleagues**”. Instead of employee-leader bond, team building is more useful in strengthening the cohesion of the team. This can be explained by the purpose of team building. Since the goal of team building is to improve bonding of the team for better development of the enterprise, it has become a frequently used mean by managers to improve team performance through increasing communication, motivation, and collaboration inside a team. Unlike the other participants, Participant 7 shared more personal interactions with his manager, such as having dinner and drinking together as well as having private conversations. According to his respond like “treats me very well” and “didn’t regard me as an outsider” shows that his manager acted like a family member when getting along with him, which developed an emotional bond and a reciprocal relationship:

Participant 7: *One day coffee essence was produced in the factory, which was very smelly. That is to say, in the factory, the smell will not dissipate for a long time. Then someone needs to go to the company very early the next morning to open all the doors and windows of the company. Then he just came to me immediately, and I was willing to take on this matter. At that time, normally, we should go to work at 8:30, but he asked me to arrive at the company at 6 o'clock, to open all the windows and doors. Other people may feel a little uncomfortable, saying why do I have to do it before the working hours? Or like, if I go to work two hours earlier, can I get off work two hours earlier? But I don't feel that way, and I don't think that way. I just feel that he treats me so well, these are what I should do.*

According to his respond, Participant 7 seemed does not mind taking on new assignments that outside of job description. (**Conscientiousness**) Statement like “he treats me so well, these are what I should do” confirmed that when leaders genuinely care about their subordinates, the feeling of gratitude and indebtedness in the subordinate ensures a continuous give-and-take in the relationship.⁴¹ Reciprocation by employees go beyond mere compliance with the leader and what is normally expected inside their job descriptions. These reciprocal interpersonal relations further strengthen the genuine trust and affective bonds between employees and their leaders.

Participants’ OCBs

During the whole interview, it is found that the OCBs of Participant 2, 6, and 7 are

⁴¹ Yang, L. S. 1957. The concept of pao as a basis for social relations in China. In J. K. Fairbank (Ed.), Chinese thought and institutions: 291-309. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

highlighted in terms of **Identification with the company** and **Conscientiousness**. (Table 8.)

Participant	Identification with the company	Conscientiousness
2	<i>We are very familiar with the leader, [...] Even if there is even a slight conflict with the leader's idea, or say it is not the same with his, we will bring it [new and good ideas] up. Because in the end, [...], method can be used as long as it is good for the company.</i>	<i>You still have to learn something by yourself [...] For me I want to do everything well. For example, the leader assigns one order to me, after finishing it, I have to think about like, today he arranged this to me, and it took me ten minutes. Then I will definitely think about how to shorten the time next time, and then I will make a little improvement, maybe use nine minutes or eight minutes to complete it.</i>
6	<i>The people here are very nice [...], the employees and the workshop are all okay [...] The company is also good, and the benefits are all fine, such as holidays, [...] anyway, the benefits are good, and they are all good in this regard.</i>	<i>At that time, we were more active in our work, that is to say, [...] Try to be sure not to make a mistake, a lapse or something. As long as the leader arranges the work, I will do it seriously. [...] when I work on my own, I put my heart and soul into the work. I'm afraid that something will go wrong. [...] Because if I made a mistake, I may blame myself for not being careful enough. Because if I make a mistake, I may not only harm the company, but also waste the company's materials [...] That is to say, I would think that if I had been more careful, or read it again, or whatever, I might not have made such a mistake and company would not have such a loss.</i>
7	<i>We are a leading enterprise in the beverage industry [...] And its rules, regulations, and benefits are also</i>	<i>Then he just came to me immediately, and I was willing to take on this matter. [...] Other</i>

	<p><i>very good. Like some small companies, especially in some small places, they don't pay the social insurances and housing fund, and then the wages are extremely low, but this is not the case in my current company. We got social insurances and housing fund, social security and so on, and in terms of wages, they won't be deducted for no reason. [...] Obviously, there is no such thing as causing losses to some employees because of personal interests. No.</i></p>	<p><i>people may feel a little uncomfortable [...] But I don't feel that way, and I don't think that way. I just feel that he treats me so well, these are what I should do. I treat the company as my home, and treat it as my own business. [...] Everyone should contribute to their own family, if we contribute our strengths, the company will also treat its employees as families, including the leader. It is this that will give employees a sense of belonging, and we will dedicate all of ourselves conscientiously.</i></p>
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Table 8. Participants' OCBs, made by the author.

When asking to describe their current company and jobs, other participants just simply described their job titles and current industry and company they are in, which were included in their profiles. However, as shown in the table, Participant 6 and Participant 7 seemed more willing to talk about good sides of their company and introduce some policies inside the company, while Participant 2 was willing to make contributions to the company even some ideas are “conflict” with the leader. Evidences proved that their genuine recognition of the enterprise. (Identification of the company) Also, their Conscientiousness were indicted in terms of trying to self-learn to increase the efficiency of work outputs (Participant 2); taking job seriously and rarely makes mistakes (Participant 6); and willing to take on new assignments that are originally not his/her job descriptions (Participant 7). The reasons behind their performance lie in their leaders' behaviors. To be specific, except Participant 3, all participants' leaders showed benevolence in their leadership. However, the extent to which leaders are concerned about the personal well-beings (both work and nonwork related) of their subordinates are different. In retrospect, leaders of Participant 2, 6, 7 showed more benevolence and morality than other participants', which led them to put more effort into work and even go beyond for their leaders and the company as a whole. Table 9 summarized the final themes and significant findings.

Participant	Perceived leadership (Prominent)	OCB
1	Authoritarian	0
2	Benevolence & Morality	2
3	Authoritarian	0
4	Authoritarian/Benevolence	1

5	Authoritarian/Benevolence	1
6	Benevolence	2
7	Benevolence	3

Table 9. Final themes with significant findings, made by the author.

Overall, employee performance lie in the extent to which leaders are concerned about the personal well-beings (both work and nonwork related) of their subordinates. The more genuine benevolence leaders show, more likely that employees will become more intrinsically motivated to go above and beyond their job descriptions.

This can be explained by social exchange theory, which posits that people are usually motivated to reciprocate beneficial behaviors based on the perceptions of indebtedness and obligation toward the person providing the initial favor. That is, employees will reciprocate by desired behaviors if they perceive their leaders showing concern and care for them. At that point, the relationships between employees and their leaders becomes more of social exchange instead of the standard economic contract. Thus, it is more likely that they will spend more time on required duties and be willing to go beyond their job descriptions and benefit the company as a whole. However, relationships based on hierarchy are often formal, instrumental exchange oriented, and short term (Hwang, 1987). Therefore, authoritarian leader behaviors may be effective at soliciting conformity, but fall short of truly motivating followers to maximum their efforts to go beyond.⁴² Figure 2 illustrates the two different mechanisms between leadership and its outcome.

Social Exchange:



⁴² Farh, J. L., Cheng, B. S., Chou, L. F., & Chu, X. P. 2006. Authority and benevolence: Employees' responses to paternalistic leadership in China. In A. S. Tsui, Y. Bian, & L. Cheng (Eds.), *China's domestic private firms: Multidisciplinary perspectives on management and performance*: 230-260. New York: Sharpe.

Instrumental Exchange:



Figure 2. Two different mechanisms between leadership and employee performance, made by the author.

Summary

This study was conducted to discover Chinese employees' desired leadership practices that improve their performance in the workplace.

Preference of benevolence and directive leadership has been studied. the finding covers the fundamental factors of paternalistic leadership – authority and benevolence. Participants prefer leaders who express benevolence in a way of encouragement, support, guidance, and even cultivation, and provide clear direction and at the same time freedom and flexibility.

The literature positively substantiates the acceptance of power/status inequality in Asian workplace, which is validated by the research presented in this study. Due to the confusion value “higher ups govern, lower ranks obey”⁴³, duty and responsible of leaders justify the power inequality between leaders and subordinates, which is supported by previous studies (R. Takeuchi, et al., 2020; Ashkanasy) In addition, data from the study indicate that the acceptance of power inequality may due to employees' faith in their leaders in terms of their competence.

However, even though there is a large acceptance of power distance, Chinese employees generally hold negative attitudes toward authoritarianism. The finding contrasts with Deanne N, et al. (1999)'s, instead of authoritarianism, Chinese employees prefer those leaders who don't ostentatiously show their power. Findings shows that even though they experience negative emotions under authoritarian leadership, their trust level to the leader remains intact.⁴⁴ However, since the reason behind their obedience toward authoritarian leadership lies in

⁴³ Beamer, L. 1998. Bridging business cultures. *China Business Review*, May-June: 54-58.

⁴⁴ Chen, Xiao-Ping, et al. “Affective Trust in Chinese Leaders: Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Employee Performance.” *Journal of Management*, vol. 40, no. 3, Mar. 2014, pp. 796–819. SAGE Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311410604>.

culture-based value system (the acceptance of power difference) and competence recognition, authoritarian leadership may reduce employees' performance. Therefore, it is conceivable that employees will become less intrinsically motivated to go above and beyond their job descriptions if the leader shows more authoritarianism.

Evidence proves that participants held positive attitudes (warm feelings and gratitude) toward the leader when the leader concerns for their job-related and personal well-being. Also, consistent with Mansur et al. (2017), integrating authoritarian and benevolence can be an effective way to improve subordinates' performance by gaining respect from them. This can be explained by the father-like role of Asian leaders. By showing authority as well as benevolence like a "father", Asian leader expect employees' genuine trust and thus commitment. Similarly, moral leadership behaviors can induce positive emotions in employees that provide the foundation of positive personal bonds with their leaders. Specifically, employees willingly reciprocate the protection and care of their leaders with conformity.

Upon analysis and examination of the transcripts, it was unmistakable that Asian leaders proactively utilize nonwork relations to achieve their goals in work domains. (Leung, K., & White, S., 2004; R. Takeuchi, et al., 2020) In the study, Chinese employees find nonwork relationships helpful in boosting relationships between colleagues (**Altruism toward colleagues**). The purpose of team building is to improve bonding of the team for better development of the enterprise, so, instead of employee-leader bond, team building is more useful in strengthening the cohesion of the team. Moreover, personal interactions with manager can develop an emotional bond and a reciprocal relationship. Findings confirm that when leaders genuinely care about their subordinates, the feeling of gratitude and indebtedness in the subordinate ensures a continuous give-and-take in the relationship.⁴⁵ Reciprocation by employees go beyond mere compliance with the leader and what is normally expected inside their job descriptions. (**Conscientiousness**) These reciprocal interpersonal relations further strengthen the genuine trust and affective bonds between employees and their leaders.

Former chapter has illustrated two different mechanisms between leadership and employee performance by social exchange theory. To be specific, employees will reciprocate by desired behaviors if they perceive their leaders showing concern and care for them. At that point, the relationships between employees and their leaders becomes more of social exchange instead of the standard economic contract (instrumental exchange). Thus, it is more likely that they will spend more time on required duties and be willing to go beyond their job descriptions and benefit the company as a whole.

This study contributes to explore Chinses employees' leadership preference as well as providing an explanation for the effects of authoritarian and benevolence as well as morality

⁴⁵ Yang, L. S. 1957. The concept of pao as a basis for social relations in China. In J. K. Fairbank (Ed.), *Chinese thought and institutions*: 291-309. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

leadership behaviors on employees' work performance. This study also uniquely highlights the importance of benevolence and morality in Asian leadership. These results will be useful for 21st-century leaders active in Asian context especially if they work with the current Chinese employees in the workforce.

V. IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

Chapter IV described the findings from data collection and analysis related to Chinese employees' leadership preference, the raw data uncovered new themes and unexpected findings. Voov interviews allowed for the collection of first-hand experiences from Chinese workers within traditional industry in China. Chapter V will cover the implication of the study as well as the limitation of the study. Conclusions based on the whole dissertation are made in Chapter V.

Implications

This study contributes to explore Chinese employees' leadership preference as well as providing an explanation for the effects of different leadership behaviors on employees' performance. The findings of this paper highlight the importance of benevolence and morality in leadership in Asian context. Overall, this research has important implications for both academia and practitioners alike.

Implication for Practitioners

Success in an increasingly competitive market depends on the knowledge and sensitivity of managers to employees' preference in leadership. Thus, exploring the characteristic and styles of Chinese leadership in one industry can give guide for managers to adjust their leadership styles if they are going to be recognized as leaders in that industry. It is important for leaders work in Chinese context to acknowledge the value of Asian culture and recognize leadership styles that lead to a successful connection with their workers. Result will help managers active in Asian context, especially if they work with the current Chinese employees in the workforce, by identifying leadership practices that will engage their workers. This study suggests that leaders should emphasize benevolence and morality over authoritarian behaviors and establish trusting relationships with their employees in an effort to positively affect employee performance. To be specific, they should keep a close eye on employees' needs and exhibit more benevolence and morality and less authoritarianism in the workplace.

Implications for Research

This study supports the previous research on the acceptance of power/status inequality and the importance of integration of work and nonwork life in Asian workplace. By looking at those expectations through the experiences of Chinese employees, this study adds to the existing literature of Asian leadership. As the growing importance of this group and the paucity of existing studies working with this group, this study lays a foundation for further research on this subject. Both practitioners and researchers can gain a better knowledge of what will keep Chinese employees engaged and productive in the workplace by investigating deeper into the five themes presented in this study.

Limitations

Attribution error may occur in qualitative research, because “When observers ask leader about their behavior, they increase the likelihood of becoming involved in the very processes under observation, thereby risking objectivity.⁴⁶” Furthermore, when interpreting events for practitioners, interpretation itself can be a reflection of the prevailing culture and values.⁴⁷ Therefore, prudent and cautious is needed to reduce subjectivity. Instead of predetermining categories, researcher wrote narrative descriptions and coded them after.

Also, this study was restricted to a small sample size of 7 Chinese employees who were interviewed. The small sample size may not fully represent the wide range of Chinese employees with different experiences and backgrounds, which may have influenced their responses to the interview questions. This study may not be representative of Chinese workers in secondary industry as it was restricted to the small sample size.

Conclusion

The success and effectiveness of an organization are affected by different leadership styles. Competent managers should have knowledge and sensitivity of employee preference in leadership practices. The purpose of this case study was to capture Chinese employees’ leadership preference for higher performance in the workplace from the lived experiences of Chinese employees employed in food industry.

At a broader level, this paper was motivated by the observation that labor-intensive industries in China are facing the rising labor shortages and high turnover during the structural shift from industry to services. Since differing industry sectors required different leadership styles, exploring leadership preference in traditional industry can help managers to adjust their leadership style to increase the employee’s engagement and job satisfaction. In addition, several empirical evidence supported the idea of Asian cultural context have different impact on leadership than the western, however, very little is known regarding indigenous leader characteristics and leadership styles in Asia. Since leadership should adapt to fit the culture in which it is practiced, the research study chose Chinese case to capture some culturally related attitudes in Asian, which added to the knowledge on the need for hiring culturally competent leaders.

⁴⁶ Yukl, Gary. "Managerial leadership: A review of theory and research." *Journal of management* 15.2 (1989): 251-289.

⁴⁷ Calas, M.B., & Smircich, L. (1988). Reading leadership as a form of cultural analysis. In J.G.

Hunt, B.R. Baliga, H.P Dachler, & C.A. Schriesheim (Eds.), *Emerging leadership vistas* (pp.

201-226). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

This study finds that Chinese employees desire to have a more benevolent and moral leader whom they can build a trust relationship with. In addition, leaders should keep a close eye on employees' needs and pay attention to non-work relations. Findings from this research also reveal that humility was considered as desirable leadership trait among Chinese workers. They advance the understanding of the possible mechanism for perceptions of leaderships and OCBs. This study suggests that leaders should exhibit more benevolence and morality and less authoritarianism in the workplace if they want to positively affect employee performance. As increasingly important roles China plays in the world economy, the data collection, data analysis, results presented by this study may provide a starting point for future research within this area of study.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

You are being invited to participate in a study on workplace leadership preferences. This informed consent form provides you with some information to read carefully before deciding whether to participate in the study. It will help you understand the study and its purpose, the duration and procedures of the study, and the risks and discomforts associated with your participation in the study. Please read it carefully, ask the researcher any questions you may have, and ask the researcher to explain until you fully understand the study.

1. Project title: Leadership Preferences of Chinese Employees in the Workplace - An Exploratory Study

2. Researcher: SEO YOUNG KIM

3. Background and Purpose of the Study: This study was conducted by a master's student at the Department of International Studies, Seoul National University (Korea), and the results obtained will be used for a thesis. This study aims to understand the leadership preferences of Chinese practitioners through qualitative research and design methods.

4. Research Process: The interview will include your perceptions and satisfaction with leadership style, culture, and relationship with the supervisor. The interview will be audio- and video-recorded, and you will respond verbally to questions posed by the researcher.

5. Possible risks, unsuitability and inconvenience of participating in this study: The possible risk of participating in this study is that your personal information (e.g., name) will be disclosed. In order to keep your personal information confidential, the researcher will use your nickname instead of your real name during the interview process and when disclosing the relevant interview content, and your workplace name will not appear in the paper.

6. Confidentiality of personal information and records: If you decide to participate in this study, your participation in this study and your personal information during the study will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that can identify you without your permission will not be disclosed to members outside the research team. Only members of the IRB will have access to your research data if necessary.

7. You may voluntarily choose to participate in the study or withdraw from the study: participation in the study is entirely up to you. If you have any questions about the study, you may ask the researcher. You may also refuse to participate in the study or withdraw from the study at any time during the study. This will not affect your rights. As a research subject, you have a responsibility to present the facts. If you fail to comply with this responsibility, the researcher may terminate your continued participation in this study.

8. If you have any questions or do not understand anything related to this study, or if you feel that you have been treated unfairly while participating in this study, you may speak to the person in charge of the study at any time.

I have read the above description of this study and have had the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about this study with the researcher. All of the questions I have asked have been answered deductively.

I am aware of the risks that may arise from participation in this study. I understand that participation in the study is voluntary, I acknowledge that I have had sufficient time to consider it, and I understand:

1. I can ask the researcher for more information at any time.
2. I may withdraw from this study at any time without discrimination or reprisal.
3. If I do not comply with the study plan, the researcher may terminate my continued participation in this study.
4. I will be given a signed and dated copy of the informed consent form.

Finally, I have decided to give my consent to participate in this study.

Signature of study subject (interviewee) _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Statement

I confirm that the details of this study, the possible risks and the benefits have been fully explained to the study subject (interviewee) and that he/she has been given a signed copy of the informed consent form.

Name of the investigator: SEO YOUNG KIM

Investigator's signature:  _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been employed by the company?
4. What do you enjoy about this company?
5. What is your job description in current company?
6. Can you describe a typical workday?
7. Describe your current supervisor's leadership skills. What are his/her strengths? What are his/her areas of improvement?
8. As an employee, what leadership styles motivate you in the workplace?
 - Please give an example of a situation with an employer that motivated you to work.
9. How do you think of power inequality in the workplace?
 - How would you describe it?
10. Have you experienced authoritarianism in workplace?
 - If so, please share some specific examples.
 - How do you feel about it?
11. Have you experienced benevolence in workplace?
 - If so, please share some specific examples.
 - How do you feel about it?
12. Do you have personal nonwork relationship with your supervisor?
 - If so, please share a specific example of a time when you had a personal (non-work) relationship with your supervisor. What was going on at the time?
 - How do you think of it? Do you feel it contributes to your work or non-work relationship with your supervisor? Please share some specific examples.
13. What's the secret of keeping a good relationship with your supervisor?
14. What specific behaviors contributed to the development of a close working relationship?
15. In your own words, describe a stressful situation at work with your supervisor?
16. As an employee, what advice would you give to supervisors to increase employees' engagement in the workplace? (In addition to the above mentioned)
17. Is there anything else you would like to add to today's conversation?