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Leadership Across Cultures: A Systematic Review of the Influence of National Culture on Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Dr. Marie Claire Ngo

Lecturer, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

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Corresponding Author: Dr Marie Claire Ngo

Abstract

Purpose: This study systematically reviews empirical research on how national culture influences the effectiveness of transformational (TFL) and transactional leadership (TSL). It aims to clarify how cultural values shape the practice, perception, and outcomes of these leadership styles across diverse contexts. By synthesizing existing findings, the review seeks to identify consistent patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the literature, highlighting where cultural factors strengthen or weaken leadership effectiveness.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A structured search was conducted across four major academic databases, identifying 81 eligible empirical studies. Using a systematic content-analysis approach, each study was coded for leadership style, cultural framework, methodological design, sample characteristics, and performance indicators. This allowed comparison across cultural contexts and the synthesis of cross-study patterns, divergences, and research gaps.

Findings: Transformational leadership generally enhances employee commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational performance across most cultural contexts, though its expression and strength vary by cultural dimensions. Evidence is mixed regarding its effectiveness in highly collectivist and high power-distance societies, yet TFL remains more consistently beneficial than TSL. Some studies indicate that combining both styles yields complementary advantages. Research remains heavily Western-centric, with limited representation of non-Western, particularly African contexts and insufficient exploration of cultural moderators, gender differences, and multilevel or longitudinal dynamics which restricts deeper theoretical development.

Research Limitations/Implications: The evidence base is

predominantly Western, limiting generalizability to non-Western and under-studied cultural contexts. Many studies rely on cross-sectional, single-level, and self-report designs, constraining causal inference and contextual interpretation. These limitations highlight the need for more diverse samples, longitudinal and multilevel methods to advance understanding of leadership effectiveness across national cultures.

Practical Implications: Findings suggest that transformational leadership offers broad benefits but must be adapted to local cultural values to achieve optimal impact. Leaders should tailor their behaviors to cultural preferences, using culturally sensitive communication and influence strategies. Combining transformational and transactional behaviors may be particularly effective in multicultural or global organizations. Organizations should invest in cross-cultural leadership development to enhance global leadership competencies.

Social Implications: Understanding how culture shapes leadership effectiveness supports more inclusive and culturally responsive leadership practices. Expanding research beyond Western contexts also promotes more equitable representation of global leadership perspectives, contributing to fairer and more culturally aware leadership development across regions.

Originality/Value: This review advances understanding of how national culture shapes both the practice and effectiveness of TFL and TSL by synthesizing evidence across diverse contexts. It identifies key methodological and contextual gaps. The review offers a culturally grounded framework for interpreting leadership effectiveness and proposes directions for developing leadership models that better reflect global cultural diversity.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, National Culture, Leadership Effectiveness, Systematic Literature Review, Cross Cultural Leadership

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, organizations operate across national and cultural boundaries, making culturally responsive leadership essential for organizational effectiveness. Existing research consistently shows that national culture and intercultural dynamics shape how leadership is enacted and perceived (Paiuc, 2021; Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024). As global workforce diversity expands, cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural competence have become critical leadership capabilities associated with improved organizational outcomes (Hong & Minbaeva, 2022; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016).

Despite this growing recognition, leadership scholarship remains dominated by Western-developed theories, raising concerns about their universal application across diverse cultural contexts (Sposato & Rumens, 2021; Wickert *et al.*, 2024). This gap underscores the need for research that systematically examines how leadership effectiveness varies across different national cultures and how culture moderates the influence of widely studied leadership styles.

This review focuses specifically on transformational and transactional leadership, two central dimensions of the Full Range Leadership Model because of their prominence in organizational research and their frequent application in cross-cultural studies. Although transformational leadership has been widely associated with positive organizational outcomes, evidence remains mixed regarding its applicability across culturally diverse settings, while the cultural contingencies of transactional leadership are even less clearly understood.

The purpose of this study is to synthesize empirical findings on how national culture influences the effectiveness of transformational (TFL) and transactional leadership (TSL), identify methodological and contextual gaps, and clarify the extent to which these leadership approaches demonstrate universality or cultural specificity. Through a systematic review of 81 empirical studies conducted across multiple national contexts, the study aims to provide an integrated understanding of the cultural factors shaping leadership outcomes and to offer direction for developing culturally grounded leadership frameworks.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research on transformational and transactional leadership, empirical findings on their effectiveness across national cultures remain inconsistent. Studies disagree on whether transformational leadership yields uniformly positive outcomes in high collectivist or high power-distance cultures (Mustafa & Lines, 2016; Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018), while the cultural contingencies surrounding transactional leadership are even less established. These inconsistencies limit the extent to which existing leadership theories can be reliably generalized across diverse cultural settings.

A further challenge is the persistent Western-centric bias in leadership scholarship. Research is heavily dominated by Western-developed theories and samples (Sposato & Rumens, 2021; Wickert *et al.*, 2024), resulting in an underrepresentation of non-Western contexts, particularly African cultural environments where leadership dynamics may diverge significantly. This imbalance shapes theoretical assumptions and masks context-specific leadership variations (Caldwell, 2015).

The core problem addressed in this study is the lack of clear understanding of how national culture influences the effectiveness of transformational and transactional leadership, a gap driven by contradictory empirical findings and the dominance of Western-centric research. A systematic synthesis is therefore required to clarify these inconsistencies, identify cultural patterns, and highlight neglected contexts in cross-cultural leadership research.

2. Search Methodology

The literature search was guided by studies examining the relationships among leadership, national culture, and

organizational performance. To refine and manage the broad scope of research in this area, the Boolean search method was employed. The selection of databases prioritized access to a wide range of articles from diverse, high-quality, peer-reviewed journals, allowing for effective filtering and organization of relevant materials. Additionally, in-text citations from pertinent studies were reviewed to identify further sources. To ensure rigor and relevance, several inclusion criteria were applied.

The literature search was guided by studies examining the relationships among leadership, national culture, and organizational performance. A Boolean search strategy was applied across four major academic databases, complemented by backward reference screening of relevant articles. To enhance methodological transparency and replicability, the review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Only peer-reviewed empirical journal articles were included to ensure academic rigor. Eligible studies were required to (1) examine transformational and/or transactional leadership, (2) incorporate national culture using a defined cultural framework, and (3) assess organizational or employee performance-related outcomes. Studies focusing on non-organizational contexts (e.g., education, healthcare) or relying solely on student samples were excluded to maintain contextual comparability. Additionally, conference papers, conceptual papers, and non-empirical reports were excluded.

2.2 Quality Appraisal

To justify the inclusion of the final set of 81 studies, a structured quality appraisal was conducted using criteria adapted from established appraisal tools for observational and correlational research. Each study was assessed across four dimensions:

1. Clarity of research design
2. Appropriateness of sampling and data collection procedures
3. Validity and reliability of measurement instruments
4. Adequacy of analytical techniques

Studies scoring below an acceptable quality threshold (For example, limited methodological clarity, insufficient reporting of measures) were excluded during the eligibility stage. This appraisal ensured that only studies demonstrating adequate methodological robustness were retained for synthesis.

2.3 Coding Procedure and Inter-Rater Reliability

A systematic content-analysis approach was used to synthesize findings. The authors reviewed all included studies using a predefined coding protocol. Each study was coded for leadership style examined (TFL or TSL), cultural framework and dimensions applied research design and methodology, sample characteristics, performance indicators and outcome measures. To strengthen reliability, the coders first coded a pilot subset of studies together to refine categories. Inter-rater reliability was then calculated using Cohen's κ (kappa), achieving an acceptable agreement level ($\kappa = 0.78$), indicating substantial reliability.

2.4 Data Synthesis

Following coding, descriptive and thematic synthesis was used to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the literature. Although some studies examined alternative leadership frameworks, only findings specifically related to transformational and transactional leadership were included in the final synthesis. After screening and appraisal, a total of 81 high-quality empirical studies met all criteria and were incorporated into the final analysis.

Table 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection

Stage	Records	Notes / Exclusions
Identification	644	Records identified through database searching: ABI/Inform (554), Scopus (45), Emerald (14); additional records through reference screening (31)
Duplicates Removed	512	Total records after removing duplicates
Screening	512	Records screened (title and abstract)
Records Excluded	379	Non-empirical, conceptual papers, reviews, conference papers, unrelated topics
Eligibility	133	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
Full-Text Excluded	52	Non-organizational contexts, student samples, insufficient methodological quality, lacking cultural analysis or TFL/TSL focus
Included	81	Studies included in the final synthesis

3. Analysis of Leadership

Defining leadership

Leadership has been widely examined across various theories and contexts. Earlier studies viewed it as an exercise of power, but contemporary research defines leadership as a relational process based on social influence rather than authority. Scholars have described it in terms of traits, behaviours, and processes (Shackleton, 1995; Northouse, 2010).

Shackleton (1995) defined leadership as “the process in which an individual influences other group members towards the attainment of group or organizational goals” (p. 2). This aligns closely with Northouse’s (2010) definition of leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). Both definitions highlight influence as central to leadership but do not clarify whether it is exercised through facilitative or directive means, suggesting instead that the leader primarily serves as a motivating force. Building on this perspective, Zhou *et al.* (2023) caution that the influence process should avoid reliance on power, authoritarian control, or hierarchical status, as these often result in reduced performance and follower disengagement. In contrast, Liu *et al.* (2023) contends that the very act of influencing inherently reflects the exercise of power by the leader. Reconciling these perspectives, Zheng *et al.* (2021) suggest that followers’ willingness to accept direction from leaders demonstrates the power they voluntarily confer upon those leaders. In managing influence, leaders instill positive feelings and thoughts followers have towards organizational goals (Zhou *et al.*, 2023).

Keskes (2014) expands on Shackleton’s (1995) perspective by defining leadership as “the relationship between an individual and a group based on common interest, where the group acts according to the leader’s direction.” Beyond the element of influence, Keskes emphasizes leadership as a reciprocal relationship between two parties. In a similar

vein, Drigas *et al.* (2023) argue that a great leader’s most significant achievement is fundamentally human and social, rooted in an understanding of others and conveyed through interpersonal interactions with followers. Influence thus emerges as the core element of leadership, without which leadership cannot exist. According to Marisya *et al.* (2023), motivation and persuasion constitute the essence of influence, underscoring the importance of clarity in communicating job roles and expectations. Effective communication, therefore, becomes a vital instrument of influence. As Kruskovic *et al.* (2023) note, individuals are primarily driven to meet their personal needs and are more likely to be motivated when they clearly understand the benefits and expectations associated with their work.

Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015) view the leadership concept as the act of taking ownership and accountability by applying available resources and ensuring a cohesive organization aimed at influencing a group to achieve a common objective. The key function of the leader as stated by Anderson (2024) is to create a vision, goals and strategies to make them a reality. Leadership involving goal attainments means it derives meaning in context when individuals are guided by a specific outcome. Following different leadership models, leadership interventions seem to differ in terms of their impact.

Rowe (2006) concludes that leadership is best understood as a process of interrelationships, emphasizing that it involves an engagement with time, culture, and change that differs fundamentally from management’s relationship with these same processes. Through such engagements, leadership creates organizations, whereas management maintains them (p. 1528). A common idea emerging from these definitions is that leadership is not merely a trait, but rather an act of influencing others through an interactive process directed toward achieving a defined goal. Nevertheless, viewing leadership as a process does not render the traits approach irrelevant.

Preston-Cunningham *et al.* (2017), in their study on female students’ definitions of leadership, found that participants tended to define leadership in terms of traits and behaviors rather than processes. This finding suggests that the leadership process influences both leaders and subordinates, implying that leadership within organizations can be exhibited by all members, not solely by those in designated positions (Bolden *et al.*, 2023). The leader-centric perspective inherent in many traditional definitions has consequently faced criticism (Antonakis *et al.*, 2012), underscoring the multi-faceted and evolving nature of leadership.

The prevailing consensus in leadership studies views leadership as an interactive process between leaders and followers, aimed at influencing followers toward shared goals. However, many definitions overlook the context-dependent nature of this influence, as highlighted by contingency leadership models. Although these definitions converge on the idea of influence and interaction, they often fail to account for other critical elements that shape effective leadership in practice.

Beyond influence, effective leadership also involves structuring the organization and designing jobs to facilitate successful outcomes a dimension that is often absent from conventional definitions of leadership. A weak organizational framework can undermine goal achievement, suggesting that organizational and structural design should

be recognized as integral components of leadership practice. Despite extensive research, varying perspectives continue to challenge the development of a universally accepted definition of leadership (Bolden *et al.*, 2023).

4. Culture

Defining culture

Hoebel (1966) describes culture as the social characteristics of members of a society, developed through an integrated system of learned behaviors. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as a form of collective mental programming that distinguishes one group of people from another, arguing that the core of culture lies in values. These values are typically learned at a young age and take generations to change, a conclusion supported by two large-scale studies on national cultural differences (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). Hofstede further suggests that value differences may extend across nations or regions.

Javidan and House (2001) define values as the preferences individuals hold regarding how things ought to be done, which subsequently shape the personality traits and competencies of members within a society. This suggests that a comprehensive understanding of culture necessitates examining its customs, practices, and collective preferences. Similarly, Hofstede's research identified values as a fundamental distinguishing feature among national cultures and later conceptualized culture as encompassing both deep and surface elements namely, values, rituals, heroes, and symbols (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In line with this perspective, Leung *et al.* (2005) describe culture as "the values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns characteristic of a national group" (p. 357), providing a holistic framework for understanding cultural variation.

Building upon these conceptualizations, the GLOBE study defines culture as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations" (House *et al.*, 1999, p. 182). This definition emphasizes the dynamic and intergenerational transmission of shared meanings within social groups. In a similar vein, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) describe culture as a shared system of meaning, further reinforcing the view that culture functions as a collective interpretive framework through which members of a society perceive and respond to their environment.

Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) further identified outer, middle and core components as the three layers of culture. The outer layer comprises of artifacts and products, the middle layer norms and values and the core layer contains basic assumptions. Javidan & House (2001) extended the concept of culture to mean common experiences of members of a collective transmitted across generations based on not only values but common motives, beliefs, interpretation of meanings and identities.

Societal cultures play a defining role in shaping organizations by influencing their institutional arrangements and underlying value structures; consequently, organizations can be understood as social entities embedded within broader cultural systems (Swidler, 1986). National cultural differences are therefore reflected in organizational structures and modes of functioning (Li & Harrison, 2008).

Two primary perspectives characterize the conceptualization of culture. The first pertains to observable behaviors and

shared practices among individuals, organizations, or societies. The second concerns the collective consensus regarding values commonly endorsed within a group. These shared values have provided the foundation for scholars to develop cultural dimensions, theoretical models, and empirical instruments to investigate culture at both societal and organizational levels.

Values, attitudes, and behaviors thus represent the most salient attributes of culture, offering a coherent framework for examining cross-cultural phenomena in business and management studies. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that culture is, at its core, an expression of fundamental values that tend to endure over time due to their inherent resistance to change.

Levels of analysis in culture studies

Cultural influences have been investigated across multiple levels of analysis. Foundational studies largely examined culture at the national level (Hofstede, 1980; House *et al.*, 2004), treating people within a country as a homogeneous group (Guo *et al.*, 2020). Following this approach, researchers often use Hofstede *et al.*'s (2010) national cultural dimension scores (0–100), a common tool for cross-country cultural comparisons. However, critics argue that these aggregated national scores overlook individual-level variation within countries (Cole *et al.*, 2011; Roussin *et al.*, 2016). More recent research have extended this inquiry to individual and organizational levels (Li *et al.*, 2015; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Qu *et al.*, 2015; Bertassini *et al.*, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2023), as well as to regional comparisons (Steers *et al.*, 2012; Crede *et al.*, 2019; Bischoff, 2021; Minkov *et al.*, 2023). Nevertheless, in countries such as the United States characterized by a high degree of metropolitan diversity, it becomes difficult to identify uniform cultural profiles across geographic regions. This complexity underscores the need for research that incorporates regional and ethnic variations within countries, as well as the influence of distinct leadership prototypes that emerge across these diverse contexts.

The predictive impact of cultural values on leadership outcomes as seen in the literature spans across employee perceptions (Wong *et al.*, 2007; Fukushima & Spicer, 2007; Testa, 2007; Fein *et al.*, 2015; 2022; Cho *et al.*, 2019; Gupta *et al.*, Kortsch *et al.*, 2023), emotions and attitudes (Afsar *et al.*, 2017; Puni *et al.*, 2020; Sharafzad *et al.*, 2020), job performance (Yousef, 2000; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Crede *et al.*, 2019; Testa, 2007; Hung *et al.*, 2021; Li *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2021) and organizational performance (Tsang, 2007; Nazarian, 2019; Nungky *et al.*, 2020).

How the culture concept is viewed today in regard to its implications on businesses

There has been evolution in how scholars talk about the culture concept now and its implications on business leadership and performance due to globalization and the question of dying cultures. Some studies like Passakonjaras & Yanki (2019) established the evidence of fading cultures. The findings indicated a decline over time in Indonesia's traditionally paternalistic management culture. The growing globalization of business raises an important question whether the combined effects of technology, international communication, and westernized management practices have weakened the enduring impact of national culture on organizational behaviour and performance. Some authors

predict that new technologies will gradually make societies more similar (Oyinlade, 2024). China remains a classic example of culture disintegration over the decades though there is still opportunity to confidently determine a fade in culture. This shift is particularly significant in the younger generation and has been blamed on rapid economic rise, global exposure and integration (Hofstede, 2011; Chu, 2022).

This has driven recent studies to not only explore universal leadership implications but also explore the concept of global leadership though evidence still exists of the marked variations in national and regional cultures. Following increasing establishment of global brands, there is need to consider if the question of local expectations surpasses the need for universal brand uniformity. A study by Testa (2007) and Wong *et al.* (2007) found that employees focus more on leaders' attributes than on their cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Hamlin and Patel (2020) provided empirical evidence showing that managerial behaviors and leadership effectiveness are not confined to national contexts. These findings reinforce Swierczek's (1991) conclusion that effective leadership depends more on leaders' behaviours than on the cultural characteristics they embody. However, Tarras *et al.* (2011) found that businesses which account for national culture can improve performance by 10–20%, indicating that culture remains an important contextual factor. Taken together, these studies suggest that leadership and management practices inevitably vary across cultural settings. Yet, Hofstede (2011) argues that while cultural shifts do occur, they do not diminish the relevance of national culture dimensions and index rankings, as such changes typically unfold over long periods often 50 to 100 years or more.

5. Findings and Analysis

The findings are presented according to themes identified in the literature, organized into three main categories: cross-cultural leadership studies, leadership preferences across cultures, and the universality of transformational leadership.

Cross cultural leadership studies

Smith *et al.* (1989), in an early cross-cultural study of electronics firms in the UK, USA, Hong Kong, and Japan, found that while leadership styles shared similar underlying structures, specific leader behaviors varied widely across cultures. Taras *et al.* (2011), reviewing three decades of research grounded in Hofstede's framework, showed that direct and charismatic (transformational) leadership is preferred in collectivist, high power-distance cultures, whereas participative leadership is favored in individualist, low power distance ones. They further noted that aligning organizational practices with national culture can boost performance by 10–20%. Despite extensive research, cross-cultural leadership remains a dynamic field due to its complexity and inconsistent findings (Hartog *et al.*, 2024). More recently, Dastmalchian (2020) found across 14 countries that High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) consistently enhance organizational performance, though participative, opportunity-enhancing practices are less effective in high power-distance cultures highlighting the need to adapt leadership and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices to cultural contexts.

Cho *et al.* (2019) compared transformational (TFL) and transactional leadership (TSL) and their relationship with

affective organizational commitment among U.S. and Korean employees. Reflecting cultural differences, Korea's collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance versus the U.S.'s individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, they found that TFL had a stronger positive link with affective commitment in U.S. employees, while TSL was negatively related to commitment in the U.S. but positively related in Korea. These findings highlight the influence of cultural context on leadership effectiveness and the importance of culturally responsive leadership approaches. Extending these insights, Yang (2016) argues that Korea's higher power distance and collectivism may enhance the effectiveness of transformational leadership compared to Anglo-Saxon cultures. However, Offerman and Hellmann (1997) found across 39 cultures that power distance negatively correlated with team building, approachability, delegation, and communication, indicating its adverse impact on leadership. They also observed that uncertainty avoidance was positively linked to leadership control.

Walumbwa *et al.* (2005) conducted a comparative regression analysis examining the influence of transformational leadership (TFL) on job satisfaction and employee commitment among bank employees in Kenya and the United States. They found that TFL had a stronger impact on U.S. employees than on Kenyan employees, although the overall effect on outcome variables did not significantly differ between the two cultural contexts. In contrast, Louw *et al.* (2017) reported that all dimensions of TFL significantly influenced leadership effectiveness in Kenya, with employee commitment being the most prominent factor. Similarly, Bushra *et al.* (2011) found a positive relationship between TFL, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among Pakistani bank employees. According to Walumbwa *et al.* (2007), collectivist cultures create an environment where employees are more receptive to TFL, as it unites them around shared goals, contradicting Cho *et al.*'s (2019) findings which suggest collectivist cultures favor transactional leadership (TSL). These inconsistencies highlight the need for further research into how cultural contexts shape leadership effectiveness.

Following the same line of thought, Nungky *et al.* (2020) found that transactional leadership (TSL) had an insignificant effect on organizational performance, whereas transformational leadership (TFL) had a positive and significant impact in Indonesia's highly collectivist context. Similarly, Yaghi (2017) argued that in the Middle East, effective leaders must blend TFL and TSL adaptively to match situational demands for optimal performance. Supporting this view, Hussain *et al.* (2017) compared the applicability of both leadership styles in Malaysia and Pakistan two collectivist cultures and found positive relationships between both styles and employee outcomes including satisfaction, commitment, and stress reduction. However, they cautioned that TSL is culturally contingent and should be applied diplomatically in low to moderate power-distance contexts like Pakistan. In the Nigerian context, Ejere and Ugochukwu (2013) also reported that both TFL and TSL positively influenced performance outcomes including effort, satisfaction, and effectiveness, though TSL had a weaker effect. Likewise, Teresa *et al.* (2015) found in their study of international hotels that the contingent reward aspect of TSL and the idealized attributes of TFL were the most influential factors driving employee

satisfaction, efficiency, and extra effort. Taken together, these findings emphasize that while TFL generally yields stronger positive outcomes, the effectiveness of both leadership styles depends on cultural and situational contexts.

Bealer and Bhanugopan (2014) examined national and expatriate managers in the UAE and found that U.S. expatriate managers tended to lead according to their own cultural norms, while UAE national managers followed leadership styles shaped by their societal culture. This challenges the idea that leaders readily adapt their style to align with employees' individual values. Their findings also revealed that UAE leaders exhibited more passive leadership and less TFL and TSL compared to U.S. and EU managers, contributing to lower employee satisfaction and effectiveness though some studies report no clear link between TFL and employee satisfaction (Bodla & Nawaz, 2010, cited in Bealer & Bhanugopan, 2014). Nevertheless, Mahmood *et al.* (2020) argue that enhancing leadership influence requires an integrated leadership approach. Supporting this, Yousef (2000) demonstrated that national culture moderates the relationship between leadership behavior and outcomes like job performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Hamlin and Patel (2020), through a qualitative content analysis of managerial behavior in private companies across the Asia-Pacific, particularly South Korea and India found no significant differences, suggesting that managerial behaviors and leadership effectiveness are not strictly nation-specific. This aligns with Sharafizad *et al.* (2020), who noted in a literature review that leadership practices can have varying implications depending on cultural context. However, in high power-distance and high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, such as China and Korea, employees often prefer clearly defined structures and instructions over self-governance. Supporting this, Tsang (2007) found that the success of local firms in the Chinese software industry was linked to leaders who aligned performance management practices with collectivist values.

Mahmood *et al.* (2020) evidenced that organizational performance in Kazakhstani companies was strongly influenced by paternalistic leadership, TSL, and TFL, with different leadership types impacting operational and employee outcomes in distinct ways. Their findings align with studies on leadership effectiveness in former Russian-influenced countries, where the collectivist culture increases employees' preference for supportive leadership grounded in interpersonal relationships. Given that Russian culture scores high on power distance, effective leaders are perceived as those with the authority to make unilateral decisions, reinforcing their higher status (Matveev & Lvina, 2007).

Sertel *et al.* (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 79 studies published between 1995 and 2020 to examine the relationship between leadership and organizational performance across sectors and cultures. They found that national culture moderated this relationship, with leadership effectiveness being particularly strong in vertical collectivist cultures, especially under democratic leadership. However, their analysis was limited to quantitative correlation studies, highlighting a gap and opportunity for more qualitative research on leadership and performance across cultural contexts.

Overall, these cross-national studies underscore that while certain leadership styles may have universal elements, cultural context plays a critical role in shaping leadership effectiveness, warranting further qualitative and context-sensitive investigation.

Preferences in leadership across cultures

The theoretical foundation of leadership behavior preferences is rooted in implicit leadership theory, with transactional (TSL) and transformational leadership (TFL) being closely related constructs (Fein *et al.*, 2015). Intercultural competence, a key element in effective global leadership, involves developing the ability to align one's leadership preferences with the values and expectations of other cultures (Fein *et al.*, 2015). National cultural values thus play a crucial role in shaping leadership approaches within organizations (Shim *et al.*, 2012).

Fein *et al.* (2015) explored actual and preferred leadership styles in Romania, finding that while participants held similar expectations for both TSL and TFL, notable gaps existed between ideal and observed leader behaviors. This indicates that cultural factors shape how leadership behaviors are perceived and preferred. Cho *et al.* (2019) observed that Korean employees showed a stronger inclination toward TSL, whereas Peikai *et al.* (2021) contended that not all aspects of national culture affect the link between leadership and employee engagement, suggesting that TSL may not be wholly dependent on cultural context.

Steers *et al.* (2012), through a meta-analysis of leadership across nations, found that employees in Western, American, and Eastern contexts hold differing expectations regarding acceptable leadership behaviors. These findings support the contingency leadership perspective, which argues that leadership should be contextually adaptive and local rather than global in approach. This view aligns with the GLOBE study (House *et al.*, 2004), which demonstrated the culturally contingent nature of leadership effectiveness. For instance, Javidan *et al.* (2006) observed that in high power-distance societies, leaders should limit the use of the transformational leadership (TFL) component of intellectual stimulation, as it may be perceived as a sign of incompetence. Similarly, Chaker and Jabnoun (2010) found that power distance hindered employee empowerment in Qatar's banking sector, potentially contributing to lower service quality.

Testa (2007) conducted a mixed-methods study in the hospitality sector to examine how employees evaluate leaders from different national cultures. The findings revealed that employees who shared cultural similarities with their supervisors tended to exert greater effort. In multicultural environments, employees particularly valued clarity of expectations, with effective communication identified as a critical leadership skill. Overall, the study concluded that employees focus more on leaders' personal attributes than on national background.

Building on this understanding of cultural influence, Koopman *et al.* (1999) analyzed data from the GLOBE study and found that cultural differences contributed to distinct interpretations of leadership effectiveness across clusters. Similarly, House *et al.* (1999) reported that respondents' value orientations significantly shaped leadership acceptance. Their findings indicated that societies

characterized by high power distance, collectivism, and performance orientation preferred team-oriented, participative, and charismatic leadership behaviors, respectively. Together, these studies underscore the importance of alignment between leadership prototypes and prevailing cultural values for effective leadership across contexts.

Wong *et al.* (2007) compared leadership perceptions among Chinese and Western expatriate project managers in multinational construction companies in Hong Kong and found no significant differences between the two groups. Their findings revealed that employees with high traditional values perceived a weaker relationship between TFL and leadership effectiveness, emphasizing relationship orientation over task orientation, while those with low traditional values associated TFL more strongly with effective leadership. These results suggest that cultural dimensions, particularly traditionality, shape how leadership behaviors are interpreted and can foster more harmonious leader-subordinate relationships (Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012).

Fukushige and Spicer (2007) found that despite the global prevalence of transformational (TFL) and transactional (TSL) leadership, these models are not fully embraced in Japan, a highly collectivist and high power-distance culture. Japanese employees tend to favor protective, liberal, network-oriented, trust-based, and punctual leadership styles, suggesting that applying Bass and Avolio's full-range leadership model may be counterproductive in this context. In the German context, Eisenbeib and Boerner (2013) examined potential negative effects of TFL, finding that while TFL enhanced follower creativity, it also increased dependency, which diminished overall outcomes. Similarly, Passakonjaras and Hartijasti (2019) reported that certain TFL components positively influenced employee satisfaction, extra effort, and effectiveness, whereas passive management by exception of TSL negatively affected effectiveness. Their study also highlighted ethnic differences in leadership style preferences and noted a decline in traditional Indonesian paternalistic management over time, despite the country's collectivist and high power-distance culture.

In contrast, evidence from China, a culture similarly characterized by collectivism and high power distance presents a different picture. Wadei *et al.* (2021) found that TFL enhances creative performance through the mediating effects of boundary spanning and perspective taking. Likewise, Li *et al.* (2015) identified individualized consideration and charismatic influence, two components of TFL, as positive predictors of employee creativity. Supporting this, Afsar *et al.* (2017) showed that psychological empowerment strengthens the relationship between TFL and entrepreneurial behavior, whereas TSL demonstrated a negative relationship. In the Indian context, which shares cultural similarities with China, Mittal and Dhar (2015) found that transformational leadership (TFL) significantly enhances employee creativity through creative self-efficacy. Similarly, Qu *et al.* (2015) reported that in China's energy sector, TFL fosters follower creativity through relational identification. Although these studies collectively affirm the positive influence of TFL in collectivist, high power-distance societies, they rely heavily on self-reported survey data, which may limit the validity of their conclusions. Complementing these findings, Jung *et al.* (2003) demonstrated in Taiwan's telecommunications

industry that TFL directly enhances organizational innovation and empowerment, while accounting for industry-specific environmental factors.

Kasapoglu (2014) examined leadership preferences in the Turkish architecture industry and found that transformational leadership, including its affiliative, democratic, coaching, and pacesetter components, was generally favored over the coercive and authoritative aspects of transactional leadership among 40 leaders surveyed. Overall, authoritative, pacesetter, and affiliative leadership were the most preferred styles. These findings contrast with Giritli and Topcu Oraz (2004), who reported a preference for authoritative leadership among Turkish leaders in the construction sector. According to Hofstede, Turkey is characterized by high power distance, collectivism, femininity, and high uncertainty avoidance, a cultural profile that aligns with previous evidence suggesting that transformational leadership is more effective in collectivist, high power-distance societies (Jung *et al.*, 1995). However, the study's small sample size and correlational design limit the generalizability of the findings and the ability to draw causal conclusions.

Building on evidence from Turkey, research in other collectivist and hierarchical cultures further highlights how leadership preferences vary across regions and leadership styles. Jogulu and Ferkins (2012) found that Malaysian managers preferred TFL over transactional leadership. Peikai (2021) and Li *et al.* (2021) reported that TSL effects on employee engagement are generally stable across cultures, suggesting TSL is less culturally contingent. In Europe, Krallis and Souto (2014) observed that in high-power-distance Southern Europe, TSL dominated, while both TFL and TSL were equally used in North and Central Europe. Idealized influence was the main TFL trait in the south, whereas individualized consideration prevailed in the north and center, with different components showing varying impacts on employee satisfaction. Ozorovskaja *et al.* (2007) noted that Eastern European managers preferred a mix of TFL and TSL, while Western European managers favored TFL, highlighting regional differences in leadership preferences. Limitations included small samples and sector-specific contexts, which may affect generalizability.

Mancheno-Smoak *et al.* (2009) examined HR executives in the USA and found significant correlations between cultural values including collectivism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance and transformational leadership. High collectivism, high uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance predicted stronger TFL behaviors, though higher TFL was associated with lower executive job satisfaction, indicating a negative correlation. Findings on uncertainty avoidance contrast with prior studies, while power distance and masculinity/femininity were negatively related to TFL. Low masculinity and low power distance were particularly associated with TFL. Additionally, Jogulu and Ferkins (2012) observed gender differences in the ranking of TFL dimensions, highlighting variations in the expression of TFL attributes between male and female employees.

Shanin and Wright (2004) analyzed 243 participants in Egyptian banks to assess TSL and TFL applicability. Findings differed from the USA, reflecting Egypt's collectivist and Islamic culture. Key traits included hesitant decision-making linked to passive management by exception, and enthusiastic behaviors tied to intellectual

stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration under TFL. Other factors mirrored centralized management, high collectivism, and power distance. The study highlights the need for caution when applying Western leadership models cross-culturally. Puni *et al.* (2020) further show that combining TFL with TSL enhances employee commitment.

Contrary to studies that support the implicit leadership theory, Ozturk *et al.* (2017) in a systematic review study of national culture and implicit leadership studies argue that leaders with differing cultural values from subordinates could still be classified as effective leaders; employees with individualistic tendencies may classify team-oriented leaders as performant. This is congruent with the assumption that individuals who overcome cultural challenges are perceived as leaders through expressing their respective values to fill in the gaps (Ozturk *et al.*, 2017).

These studies emphasize that follower perspectives are critical in selecting effective leadership approaches. For instance, Gregory *et al.* (2011) found that considering follower perspectives significantly enhanced TFL behaviors, unlike TSL. Consequently, leaders can improve effectiveness by addressing issues through the lens of their followers. Overall, they underscore that cultural nuances shape the applicability and outcomes of transformational and transactional leadership, indicating that even within collectivist contexts, the acceptance and effectiveness of these models differ across national settings.

Universality of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership (TFL) has been widely studied, highly recommended (Cole *et al.*, 2009; Deng *et al.*, 2023) and is considered one of the most enduring and engaging approaches to examining leadership effectiveness (Bush, 2017; Vasilaki, 2011; Deng *et al.*, 2023). However, its universality remains debated. Holten *et al.* (2018) investigated TFL across employees from diverse national backgrounds and found that while TFL consistently predicts organizational outcomes, cultural differences influence the magnitude of these outcomes. Scholars generally agree that leadership styles with charismatic components are often perceived as effective across contexts (Gandolfi, 2012). Gandolfi (2012) further highlighted that effective leadership integrates charismatic attributes, and other studies indicate that in Russian and Eastern European firms, TFL positively impacts organizational performance, while TSL also contributes to achieving organizational goals. To examine the effectiveness of TFL within different cultural contexts, Spreitzer *et al.* (2005) investigated how traditionality moderates TFL's impact in U.S. and Taiwanese firms, finding support for the universal effectiveness of TFL.

Rothfelder *et al.* (2012) examined the effects of transformational (TFL) and transactional (TSL) leadership on employee job satisfaction in the German hospitality industry and found that TFL and contingent rewards were the most influential leadership factors. All dimensions of TFL positively influenced job satisfaction, whereas passive management by exception reduced it, and passive leadership showed no significant effect. Similarly, in multicultural settings, Testa (2007) reported that employees preferred the inspirational qualities associated with TFL over the control-oriented characteristics typical of TSL. Shanin and Wright (2004) further argue that TFL and TSL have universal

potential but require cultural adaptations to maximize effectiveness.

Mesu *et al.* (2015) and Erkutlu (2008) examined the impact of TFL on organizational and employee commitment in highly individualistic and collectivist cultures, respectively, and found significant positive relationships in the service industry, suggesting potential universality of TFL in promoting commitment. Mesu *et al.* (2015) consequently recommended TFL engagement for leaders in the Dutch service sector. However, Nazarian *et al.* (2019) found no direct link between TFL, TSL, and organizational effectiveness in Dutch SMEs in the hotel sector. These contradictory findings highlight the need for further research on the influence of TFL and TSL in the Dutch service context.

The GLOBE study suggests that TFL is less effective in individualistic cultures but more effective in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance (UA) (Mesu *et al.*, 2015). Given that individualistic cultures often score low on UA, these predictions appear inconsistent. Contradicting the GLOBE findings, Mancheko-Smoak *et al.* (2009) and Watts *et al.* (2020) reported high TFL ratings in high UA cultures and strong correlations between high UA and TFL, respectively. Charismatic leadership, a key component of TFL's idealized influence, was identified as a desirable prototype across most GLOBE countries, particularly in high power distance cultures (Howell *et al.*, 2007). In a mixed-methods study in Mexico, Howell *et al.* (2007) found that Mexican leaders, characterized by high power distance and collectivist values, exhibited charismatic leadership with masculine and directive traits. High power distance also influenced contingent reward behaviors of TSL, affecting employee performance recognition. However, the study did not assess the effectiveness of these leadership prototypes in practice.

Lofquist and Matthiesen (2018) examined the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on leadership styles in Norwegian organizations and found that organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was predicted by power distance and collectivism. Leaders with a collective orientation who maintained close relationships with subordinates exhibited higher OCB, suggesting greater leader effectiveness. Shim *et al.* (2012) emphasize that cultural differences in leadership significantly affect organizational behavior and performance, with power distance uniquely moderating the relationship between TFL and OCB. This moderating effect was absent among leaders with high power distance values. Norway, characterized by low power distance and a highly feminine culture, further supports these findings, as Lofquist and Matthiesen (2018) also reported a positive relationship between TFL and innovation, consistent with Rank *et al.* (2009).

Crede *et al.* (2019), in a meta-analysis of 215 studies across 34 countries, found that national culture moderated the relationship between TFL behaviors and employee performance, including task performance and OCB. Interestingly, the association was stronger in countries whose cultural profiles differed from TFL, challenging the notion of its universal effectiveness. The analysis further suggested that TFL may be less effective in developed economies, such as North America and Western Europe, while its impact is more pronounced in developing regions, including Southeast Asia, South America, the Middle East, and Africa.

The universality of leadership approaches is still supported by scholars like Swierczek (1991). Swierczek (1991) suggested in his study of Asian managers across 24 Asian countries that leadership approach is universal. He found that good and desirable leadership was based on leadership behaviors than cultural characteristics managers expressed. Results were consistent among all participants affirming the argument that there is a possibility of a culturally universal leadership approach. Evidence from Den Hartog *et al* (1999) suggests that specific components of charismatic/transformational leadership are universally embraced across cultures. In the same line of research, Dorfman *et al* (1997) examined the commonalities and differences in effective leadership processes across cultures and found that charismatic approach of TFL, contingent reward of TSL alongside supportive leadership appeared to be the three prominent universally accepted and effective approaches in all five countries engaged. Contingent punishment of TSL showed undesirable effects in all countries except the USA where it was positive. High individualism and egalitarianism in the U.S are suggested to be accountable for this result. Therefore, meeting cultural expectations as a leader may be insufficient grounds to be labeled a good leader (Ozturk, 2017). There is, however, evidence supporting the moderating role of TFL in the relationship between national culture and acquisition performance (Vasilaki, 2011), even though cross-border business acquisitions remain complex due to cultural differences (Teerikangas, 2007; Vasilaki, 2011). The managerial implications of the study are that harmonization and facilitative qualities of TFL aid in integrating two businesses operating in different cultural environments for successful outcomes (Vasilaki, 2011). Vasilaki's (2011) study was however limited in its exclusion of cross-cultural competence and intelligence of the leaders and its focus on a single leadership model.

To further evidence findings that emphasize universal effectiveness of TFL in Asian and Western countries, Wang *et al* (2005) showed that TFL is positively related to job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors in which leader member exchange fully mediated the association. Just as in western countries, Wang & Howell (2010) measured TFL behaviors at individual and group levels in 60 work groups in a Canadian company through hierarchical linear modelling and found that results at the individual level of analysis was positively associated to task performance and personal initiative while results at group level found TFL to be positively associated to team performance and supportive behavior. The study mitigated common source bias by including leaders and subordinates and developed a dual level TFL scale to measure leadership at individual and group levels; that notwithstanding, undertaking a longitudinal study would have emphasized validity in results.

Authors like Ardichvili & Gasparishvili (2001) advice that when associating with employees and exercising leadership functions, individuals should recognize the vitality in maintaining equilibrium between culturally contingent and universally endorsed leader behaviors and attributes. They studied work cultures in four post-communist countries and determined that in spite of commonalities in organizational structure and economic systems, great disparities in working cultures still prevailed. Despite such differences, there were

shared perceptions among the investigated countries on TSL, charismatic, and laissez-faire leadership models.

While national culture has been shown to moderate the effectiveness of transformational leadership, another important contextual factor influencing its expression and impact is gender. TFL has often been described as a feminine leadership style, found to be more effective among women than men due to their nurturing, considerate, and supportive nature, as well as their ability to balance both masculine and feminine leadership traits (Santhi, 2015). However, studies in certain contexts, such as Malaysia, indicate that TFL can be equally effective among male and female leaders (Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012; Lo *et al.*, 2010). These characteristics are increasingly recognized as valuable in contemporary organizations facing rapid and complex environmental changes.

Summing up, Leaders influence tactics are seen to be significantly distinguished by national culture though some universal components have been determined.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Consistent with Lowe and Gardner's (2000) ten-year comprehensive review, this study highlights the sustained scholarly interest in transformational leadership (TFL), indicating that TFL continues to be a prominent focus of leadership research. Also, there is suggestion from the literature that some leadership styles or behaviors are implicit to certain cultures. Research suggests that leadership is universal as well as a culture specific construct (Hartog & Hoogh, 2024). Current research emphasizes the importance of leaders' understanding of cultural differences, how it impacts them and organizational performance (Perez, 2017). As noted by Hamlin & Patel (2020), managerial practices and effectiveness are not nation specific.

Some studies infer the universality of both transactional (TSL) and transformational leadership (TFL) (Caza *et al.*, 2021), though they also acknowledge that variations in implementation across cultures influence effectiveness. The literature further highlights differences in the effectiveness of specific components within TFL and TSL. Evidence points to the importance of situational contingencies (Shanin & Wright, 2004; Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005; Jogulu, 2012; Passakonjaras, 2019), where scholars, like Watts *et al.* (2020), challenge the notion of TFL's universality. Similarly, Steers *et al.* (2012) emphasize the value of culturally grounded approaches to leadership, rejecting the idea of a universal model.

Nonetheless, several studies (Spreitzer, 2005; Wong *et al.*, 2007; Swierczek, 1991; Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999) continue to support the cross-cultural effectiveness of TFL, suggesting that certain leadership principles may transcend cultural boundaries. Even so, considerable evidence still disputes the universal applicability of TFL across different cultural contexts (Fukushige & Spicer, 2007; Shanin & Wright, 2007; Crede *et al.*, 2019). Among studies examining specific TFL dimensions, idealized influence consistently emerges as the most valued attribute across cultures (Howell, 2004; Teresa *et al.*, 2015; Tsai *et al.*, 2019), with particular prominence observed in Latin American countries (Howell *et al.*, 2007).

Very few studies examine the impact of TSL across cultures of which Peika (2012) finds that TSL is not culturally contingent while Krallis & Souto (2014) and Shanin &

Wright (2007) state otherwise. The contingent reward dimension of TSL appears to be the most effective across cultures and considered a positive reinforcement (Rothfelder *et al*, 2012; Teresa *et al*, 2015; Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019). Active management by exception of TSL has also been confirmed to have a significant impact on leadership across cultures (Pei Kai, 2021). The determination of organizational success is reliant on leadership considering that most businesses fail due to their inability to consider the nature of employees which result in incompetence (Bonsu, 2018). It is, however, observed from the literature that TFL is more effective across cultures than TSL. It particularly showed a strong positive relation with employee commitment (Walumbwa, 2005; Cho *et al*, 2019; Louw, 2017) and job satisfaction (Rothfelder, 2012). Still, some studies suggest the importance in engaging both leadership approaches to maximise leadership outcomes (Ardichvili & Gasparishuili, 2001; Shanin & Wright, 2004; Ejere & Ugochukwu, 2013; Yaghi, 2017; Hussain, 2017; Bealer & Bhanugopan, 2014; Mahmood *et al*, 2020; Puni *et al*, 2020). The findings show contradictory results on the effectiveness of TFL in high collectivist and high-power distant (PD) cultures. Walumbwa *et al* (2005) found that TFL has low impact on employee outputs while other studies examined the preference of TFL over TSL in high PD and collectivist cultures and suggest that there is a major preference for TFL over TSL (Giritli & Topcu Oraz, 2004; Howell *et al*, 2007, Ozorovskaja *et al*, 2007, Tsai *et al*, 2009; Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012; Kasapoglu, 2014;). Contrary to these studies, Louw *et al* (2017), Ejere & Ugochukwu (2013) find that TFL in high collectivist and PD cultures have significant impact on leadership effectiveness. Nungky *et al* (2020) confirm these findings by stating that TFL portrayed a positive significant impact on organizational performance in a high collectivist society. There is also evidence that high PD and collectivist cultures are more inclined towards TSL (Cho *et al*, 2019).

The literature suggests that transactional leadership (TSL) tends to have weaker effects on performance outcomes compared to transformational leadership (TFL) in collectivist societies (Ejere & Ugochukwu, 2013; Nungi *et al*, 2020). However, other studies indicate that combining both leadership styles can enhance organizational performance (Yaghi, 2017; Mahmood *et al*, 2020) and employee outcomes (Hussain, 2017) within collectivist cultures. Furthermore, scholars have established a positive relationship between low uncertainty avoidance and greater innovativeness (Den Hartog *et al*, 1999; Tojarei & Zarei, 2011; Watts *et al*, 2020), suggesting that cultural dimensions may moderate the effectiveness of leadership styles. The effectiveness of leaders with different cultural values operating in different cultures could be justified by that it brings different experiences to work (Ozturk, 2017).

As concerns cultural values of femininity and masculinity and its implications on TFL, individualistic societies tend to be highly feminine, and it is argued that feminism effect overshadows the individualistic value effect on TFL effectiveness (Lofquist & Matthiesen, 2018). There is, therefore, a strong basis to argue that feminism, among other values, constitutes a core element influencing TFL outcomes, and that TFL should be interpreted through the lens of this value.

From the literature, the full range leadership model has not received enough attention on their interaction with national culture despite being popular in leadership literature (Cho *et*

al, 2019). Even so, studies that link TFL and TSL mostly focus on the collectivist/individualist and power distance dimensions. There is limited research in this area in non-western contexts as evidenced from the empirical review especially in the African context. Leadership researchers like Cho *et al* (2019) and Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson, (2003) have called for more attention on multiple levels of analysis to how leadership and its outcomes are affected by cultural factors.

Overall, while national cultures may lead to a certain predisposition on style, leaders must consider both interpersonal and task features to be effective. Synthesizing the literature, it is clear that TFL generally yields more positive outcomes than TSL, but its effectiveness is contingent on cultural values and contexts. Moreover, combining TFL and TSL strategically can maximize organizational and employee outcomes across diverse contexts.

To integrate these findings theoretically, this review proposes a conceptual framework linking TFL and TSL effectiveness to key cultural dimensions of power distance, collectivism/individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and gender values. The framework suggests that TFL is amplified in low PD and high individualist cultures, whereas TSL may be more effective in structured, high PD environments.

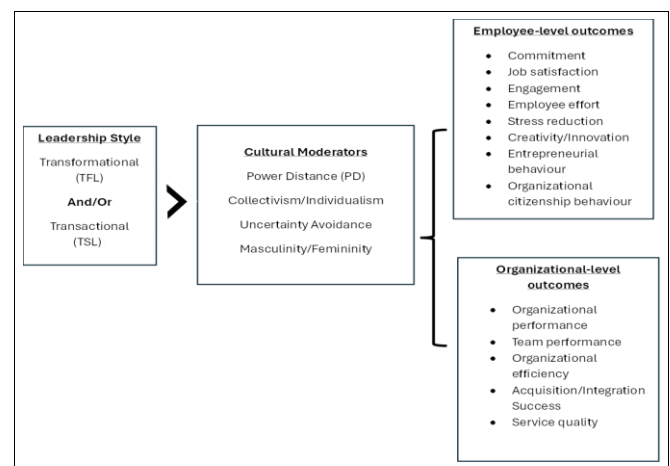


Fig 1: Proposed Conceptual Model to Guide Future Cross-Cultural Leadership Research

In line with the study objectives, this synthesis demonstrates that leadership is both universal and culturally contingent. That notwithstanding, certain studies provide evidence that there is increasing convergence in values around the world typically inspired by western societies. The argument remains that national cultural and regional variations still create impact in business environments. This perspective provides guidance for future research, suggesting empirical testing of the proposed framework in non-Western contexts, with consideration for additional moderating variables such as industry, organizational size, and regional norms.

This integrative approach not only strengthens theoretical understanding of cross-cultural leadership but also offers practical insights for organizations seeking to develop leadership programs that account for cultural contingencies, thereby enhancing both employee and organizational performance.

7. Gaps in Literature

The review reveals several notable gaps in existing leadership and culture research. First, there remains a scarcity of studies examining the moderating effects of national culture on the relationship between leadership and organizational performance. Much of the existing work focuses on employees' cultural orientations rather than on how leaders' own cultural values shape their behaviors and effectiveness. Comparative analyses that jointly consider leader and employee cultures alongside leadership approaches are also limited.

Research on transformational leadership remains heavily concentrated in Anglo-Saxon contexts, with limited exploration in regions such as Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. This imbalance restricts the global applicability of findings and highlights the need for broader cross-national and cross-cultural studies, to enhance generalizability and expand understanding of leadership effectiveness in diverse environments.

Additionally, most studies have examined cultural values at the national level, often emphasizing collectivism, individualism, and power distance, while neglecting dimensions such as masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Future studies should integrate these less-explored cultural components to capture the multifaceted nature of culture's influence on leadership. Methodologically, leadership research remains predominantly quantitative and cross-sectional, which limits the ability to establish causality. Longitudinal and qualitative studies are needed to uncover how leadership behaviors evolve within intercultural environments and how they influence long-term organizational outcomes.

Another significant gap lies in the lack of multilevel analyses that consider both national and individual cultural attributes. As modernization and global work practices increasingly blur traditional cultural boundaries, understanding how individual-level variations interact with national culture is essential. A configural, multilevel approach would therefore provide deeper insight into leadership dynamics within and across societies.

Gender also remains an underexplored dimension in leadership research. There is limited evidence on how transformational and transactional leadership are expressed and perceived differently among male and female leaders, as well as how gendered traits influence leadership effectiveness across varying cultural contexts. Addressing these gaps would enrich understanding of leader prototypes and the impact of gendered leadership behaviors, particularly in cultures with distinct gender norms.

Furthermore, given that leadership is inherently a relational process, more attention should be directed toward the moderating role of leader-member exchange in shaping the outcomes of transformational and transactional leadership. Exploring how leader-follower relationships differ across cultural contexts would enable the development of empirically grounded models of high-performing leadership that are culturally sensitive and adaptable.

Finally, the dominance of Western based research underscores the need to examine leadership effectiveness among non-Western leaders. Despite widespread recognition of the charismatic dimension of transformational leadership as a key driver of leadership success, there is a notable lack of studies exploring how effective

communication strategies, which are central to charisma, operate across different cultural contexts.

The present review is also limited by its methodological scope, as it draws on four primary databases and excludes dissertations and studies from non-business sectors. It is debatable whether the inclusion of these additional sources might have produced different insights or expanded the range of evidence considered.

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