

Cultural Dimensions of Leadership Effectiveness: A Comprehensive Review of Transformational Leadership, Work Engagement, and Gender Dynamics in Contemporary Multi-Cultural Organizations

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Abstract: The intersection of transformational leadership, work engagement, and gender dynamics in multi-cultural organizations has become a central focus in management research. This review synthesizes findings from 78 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025, examining how cultural factors, gender differences, and leadership styles interact to influence employee engagement and organizational outcomes. A systematic analysis of cross-cultural research determines how the effectiveness of transformational leadership varies across cultural contexts and gender compositions. The main findings show that transformational leadership consistently has a positive effect on work engagement (average effect size $r = 0.64$), though this relationship is significantly moderated by cultural values, gender composition, and organizational context. Female leaders show stronger transformational behaviors in collectivist cultures ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), while male leaders are more effective in individualist environments ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). Psychological empowerment is a critical mediating variable, with more pronounced effects in cultures that prioritize reduced power distance. Cultural intelligence is a key moderating factor, as leaders with high cultural intelligence achieve superior engagement outcomes regardless of gender ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$). These findings advance leadership theory by providing a comprehensive framework for understanding culturally responsive leadership and offer practical guidance for developing effective leadership strategies in diverse organizations.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, cultural dimensions, gender dynamics, work engagement, psychological empowerment, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural management

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Introduction

The globalization of business and the growing diversity of workforces have fundamentally changed the criteria for leadership effectiveness. Organizations now operate in complex multi-cultural environments, requiring leaders to navigate diverse value systems, communication styles, and behavioral norms while maintaining high employee engagement and organizational performance. This complexity has prompted

academic interest in how the effectiveness of transformational leadership varies across cultural and gender dimensions, especially regarding employee work engagement outcomes.

Work engagement, characterized as a positive and fulfilling psychological state encompassing vigor, dedication, and absorption, has become a critical factor for organizations seeking to enhance productivity, retain talent, and drive innovation (Fernandez

& Liu, 2023). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that engaged employees deliver superior performance, including 23% higher profitability, 18% greater productivity, and 12% improved customer interactions compared to disengaged counterparts (Gallup, as cited in International Management Academy, 2024). However, the antecedents of work engagement, particularly leadership behaviors, vary significantly across different cultural and demographic contexts.

Transformational leadership, defined by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is widely recognized as effective for promoting employee engagement. Meta-analytic research consistently confirms strong positive associations between transformational leadership and engagement outcomes. Recent studies, however, suggest that its effectiveness depends on cultural context, with notable variations across national cultures, organizational environments, and gender compositions.

Gender dynamics further complicate the study of leadership effectiveness. Recent research indicates that patterns of transformational leadership and the relative success of female and male leaders differ according to cultural context. Evidence suggests that women frequently excel in transformational leadership behaviors such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, while men may demonstrate greater proficiency in idealized influence and intellectual stimulation.

These patterns are moderated by cultural values, including masculinity-femininity, power distance, and collectivism-individualism.

Cultural dimensions play a crucial role in shaping leadership expectations and determining the outcomes of leadership effectiveness. Hofstede's framework, which encompasses dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty

avoidance, provides a theoretical basis for understanding these differences (Hassan & O'Connor, 2023). Recent studies indicate that transformational leadership tends to be more effective in cultures characterized by low power distance and high collectivism, whereas transactional leadership might prove more successful in environments with high power distance and individualistic cultures (Cross-Cultural Research Consortium, 2023).

Psychological empowerment has become increasingly important in understanding the connection between leadership and engagement. This empowerment, which includes meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, appears to be the mechanism through which transformational leadership influences engagement.

The strength of this mediating relationship varies considerably across cultural contexts, with more pronounced effects observed in cultures that emphasize individual agency and participation.

This comprehensive review addresses three primary research questions: (1) How do cultural dimensions influence the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement? (2) In what ways does gender affect leadership effectiveness across different cultural contexts? (3) How do psychological empowerment and cultural intelligence function as mediating and moderating variables within these relationships?

This review contributes to leadership and cross-cultural management literature by systematically synthesizing the influence of culture and gender on transformational leadership effectiveness. The insights inform leadership development, organizational strategy, and cross-cultural management practices in global organizations.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Transformational Leadership Theory in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Transformational leadership theory, introduced by Burns in 1978 and later elaborated by Bass in 1985, provides a framework for understanding how leaders motivate followers to move beyond self-interest toward shared goals. The model includes four components: idealized influence (leaders as role models), inspirational motivation (conveying visions), intellectual stimulation (promoting innovation), and individualized consideration (addressing followers' unique needs).

Research across cultures has shown that the expression and impact of transformational elements vary significantly depending on cultural contexts. In cultures with high power distance, idealized influence may be more easily accepted due to hierarchical norms, whereas individualized consideration may be less appreciated due to a focus on collectivism. On the other hand, in cultures with low power distance, intellectual stimulation and participatory decision-making might be more successful because of egalitarian principles.

The GLOBE project results indicate that transformational leadership is recognized globally as effective; however, the behaviors defining effective leadership differ significantly across cultures. Charismatic or value-based leadership, which closely aligns with transformational leadership, consistently emerges as the most crucial leadership dimension across diverse cultural groups, receiving effectiveness ratings between 5.5 and 6.5 out of 7. Nevertheless, the particular expressions of charismatic leadership differ widely across cultures.

Recent meta-analytic findings indicate that transformational leadership is more effective in cultures marked by low power distance ($d = 0.73$), high collectivism ($d = 0.68$), and low uncertainty avoidance ($d = 0.61$). These cultural traits seem to foster environments where transformational leadership behaviors thrive and lead to beneficial outcomes for followers.

Work Engagement in Multi-Cultural Organizations

Research on work engagement has significantly expanded to include cultural differences in the factors that lead to engagement, its expressions, and its effects. The three-dimensional model of engagement, comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption, is valid across cultures and exhibits robust psychometric characteristics in various cultural settings. Nonetheless, the significance of each dimension shifts depending on the culture: vigor is more vital in individualistic societies, whereas dedication holds greater significance in collectivistic cultures.

Cultural values play a crucial role in shaping the factors that lead to engagement, with job autonomy having a more pronounced impact in individualistic cultures ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$) than in collectivistic contexts ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, social support has a stronger influence on engagement in collectivistic cultures ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$) compared to individualistic environments ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$).

The expression of work engagement differs across cultures. In individualistic cultures, employees show their engagement through personal accomplishments and innovation. In contrast, in collectivistic cultures, engagement is reflected through teamwork and loyalty to the organization. These differences have significant implications for how engagement is measured and addressed across various cultural settings.

Research conducted by the Gallup organization uncovers substantial differences in work engagement levels across the globe. Northern European countries consistently show the highest rates of engagement, ranging from 35% to 40%, while South Asian and Middle Eastern countries display lower levels, between 10% and 15%. These variations seem to be linked to cultural values, economic development, and organizational practices rather than any measurement errors.

Gender and Leadership Effectiveness

The study of gender in leadership has progressed from merely looking at male-female disparities to exploring the intricate interplay between gender, leadership styles, and surrounding factors. Modern meta-analytic findings indicate that female leaders exhibit modest benefits in transformational leadership behaviors, with effect sizes spanning from $d = 0.10$ to $d = 0.25$ across various dimensions of transformational leadership.

In terms of individualized consideration ($d = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) and inspirational motivation ($d = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), female leaders consistently achieve higher scores. Conversely, male leaders demonstrate slight advantages in idealized influence ($d = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$). These observed differences seem to be shaped by gender role expectations and socialization processes that promote distinct behavioral norms for men and women.

The idea that "think manager-think male" still impacts perceptions of leadership effectiveness, where male leaders are often rated more highly in traditionally masculine roles and female leaders tend to excel in roles typically seen as feminine. Nevertheless, in cultures that prioritize gender equality and in organizations that emphasize diversity and inclusion, these biases seem to be lessening.

Cultural values related to masculinity and femininity greatly influence the impact of gender on leadership effectiveness. Female leaders are noticeably more effective in cultures that value femininity ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) than in those that emphasize masculinity ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$). Conversely, male leaders tend to be more effective in masculine cultures ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) compared to feminine environments ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$).

The impact of gender composition introduces additional complexity to studies on leadership effectiveness, with mixed-gender teams frequently exhibiting better performance outcomes than teams of a single gender. Studies indicate that having gender diversity

within leadership teams improves decision-making quality, creativity, and the representation of stakeholders, with the most favorable results occurring when minority gender representation is moderate, between 30 and 40%.

Psychological Empowerment as Mediator

Psychological empowerment has become an essential intermediary factor in the connection between transformational leadership and work engagement. The four aspects of psychological empowerment—meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact—offer a thorough framework for grasping how leadership actions lead to motivation and engagement among followers.

Research across cultures reveals notable differences in the effectiveness of empowerment in diverse cultural settings. In cultures characterized by high power distance, the meaning dimension has a more pronounced impact ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the significance of work is critical for overcoming hierarchical limitations. Meanwhile, the competence and self-determination dimensions have stronger effects in individualistic societies ($\beta = 0.39$ and $\beta = 0.42$, respectively, $p < 0.001$), where individual agency and skill development are more highly esteemed.

The dimension of impact reveals intriguing cultural differences, displaying more pronounced effects in collectivist cultures ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), where collective influence might be prioritized over individual actions. These cultural variations have significant consequences for the development of empowerment initiatives and leadership training programs tailored to diverse cultural settings.

The processes of empowerment and their varying effects on genders have often been overlooked. However, new research indicates that male and female employees might react differently to empowerment efforts. Female employees tend to show a stronger reaction to the elements of meaning and competence,

whereas male employees exhibit a heightened sensitivity to the aspects of self-determination and impact.

Cultural Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is now recognized as a vital skill for effective leadership in diverse cultural environments. The four-dimensional framework of CQ includes a motivational component (the drive to understand cultures), a cognitive aspect (awareness of cultural systems), a metacognitive element (understanding of cultural thought processes), and a behavioral facet (the capacity to modify behavior).

Studies consistently show strong positive correlations between leaders' cultural intelligence (CQ) and follower outcomes, with meta-analytic effect sizes ranging from $r = 0.35$ to $r = 0.52$ across various outcome variables. Leaders with high CQ exhibit a remarkable ability to adjust their leadership style to suit different cultural contexts, leading to greater follower satisfaction, performance, and engagement.

The connection between cultural intelligence (CQ) and transformational leadership seems especially crucial for achieving effectiveness across cultures. Leaders who possess high CQ are better equipped to execute transformational behaviors in culturally suitable and significant ways for followers from diverse cultural settings. Studies indicate that CQ influences the relationship between transformational leadership and engagement, with more substantial effects observed for leaders with high CQ ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$) compared to those with low CQ ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$).

The study of gender differences in the development and application of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has been relatively overlooked. However, initial findings suggest that female leaders may possess a slight edge in the motivational and behavioral aspects of CQ, whereas male leaders may have a slight advantage in the cognitive aspect of CQ.

These distinctions might influence the effectiveness of cross-cultural leadership between male and female leaders.

Methodology

This thorough examination employs a systematic method in accordance with PRISMA guidelines to ensure methodological precision and transparency. The review focuses on empirical research examining the relationships between transformational leadership, work engagement, gender, and cultural considerations, published between 2020 and 2025.

This period was chosen to encompass the latest research while also guaranteeing enough available studies for a thorough synthesis.

Search Strategy and Database Selection

An extensive review of the literature was conducted across various academic databases, including PsycINFO, Business Source Premier, Web of Science, Scopus, and Management & Organization Review, as well as journals focused on cross-cultural management. The search utilized Boolean operators to integrate key phrases like "transformational leadership," "work engagement," "employee engagement," "cultural dimensions," "cross-cultural," "gender differences," "psychological empowerment," and "cultural intelligence."

In addition to database searches, manual examination of reference lists from selected articles and forward citation searches were conducted to find further pertinent studies. To ensure a focus on peer-reviewed research that meets established quality standards, conference proceedings and working papers were excluded.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

Peer-reviewed empirical studies published in English

Research examining transformational leadership and work engagement relationships

Studies including cultural or gender variables as moderators or mediators

Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research designs

Organizational samples (excluding student or laboratory studies) Studies published between 2020 2025

Exclusion Criteria:

Theoretical or conceptual papers without empirical data

Studies focusing solely on other leadership styles without transformational leadership measures

Research conducted exclusively in educational settings

Single-country studies without cultural dimension measures

Studies without adequate methodological detail for quality assessment

Study Selection and Quality Assessment

The process for selecting studies consisted of three steps: a preliminary screening of titles and abstracts, a thorough review of articles that appeared potentially relevant, and a final decision for inclusion based on quality standards. Each stage was conducted by two independent reviewers, and any disagreements were resolved through discussion and consultation with a third reviewer.

The quality assessment utilized modified versions of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists for both quantitative and qualitative research. The

evaluation focused on the representativeness of the samples, the validity of the measurements, the appropriateness of the analysis, and the quality of the result reporting. Only those studies that met the acceptable quality criteria were included in the final analysis.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction employed standardized forms that recorded details about the study characteristics, cultural context, sample demographics, leadership and engagement metrics, effect sizes, and moderating or mediating variables. Whenever feasible, effect sizes were converted to correlation coefficients, and confidence intervals were computed to estimate precision.

The analysis employed narrative synthesis methods due to the diverse study designs, measures, and cultural contexts examined. To identify patterns across the studies, thematic analysis was implemented, focusing on how cultural and gender factors influence leadership-engagement relationships.

Results and Findings

Study Characteristics and Overview

The comprehensive search initially identified 847 articles, and after screening and evaluating their quality, 78 studies met the inclusion criteria. These studies came from various geographical regions: 32% from Asia-Pacific, 28% from Europe, 18% from North America, 15% from the Middle East/Africa, and 7% from Latin America. Altogether, the studies encompassed a total sample size of 43,267 participants, with individual study samples ranging from 89 to 2,341 participants.

Table 1 Geographic Distribution and Cultural Context of Included Studies

Region	Number of Studies	Sample Size	Primary Cultural Dimensions
Asia-Pacific	25	14,892	High power distance, Collectivism
Europe	22	12,156	Low power distance, Individualism
North America	14	8,734	Individualism, Masculinity
Middle East/Africa	12	5,123	High power distance, Masculinity

Latin America	5	2,362	High power distance, Collectivism
Transformational Leadership and Work Engagement Across Cultures			considerable differences across various cultural settings, with effect sizes ranging from $r = 0.41$ to $r = 0.78$, influenced by cultural dimensions and the measurement methods employed.
The connection between transformational leadership and work engagement exhibited			

Table 2 Cultural Moderators of Transformational Leadership-Work Engagement Relationship

Cultural Dimension	High Values (r)	Low Values (r)	Moderation Effect (β)	Significance
Power Distance	0.52	0.71	0.23	$p < 0.001$
Individualism	0.68	0.59	0.18	$p < 0.01$
Masculinity	0.61	0.66	0.12	$p < 0.05$
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.55	0.69	0.21	$p < 0.001$
Long-term Orientation	0.64	0.62	0.08	ns

Power Distance Effects

Research consistently shows that transformational leadership has a more profound impact in cultures with low power distance than in those with high power distance. In more egalitarian societies, where there is less emphasis on hierarchy, transformational leaders see better engagement results ($r = 0.71$, 95% CI 0.68, 0.74) compared to more hierarchical societies ($r = 0.52$, 95% CI 0.48, 0.56). This disparity seems to arise from a higher level of acceptance for participative and empowering leadership styles in cultures that value equality.

According to a longitudinal study by Chen et al. (2023), which included 1,247 employees from 15 different countries, the impact of transformational leadership on engagement was more significantly mediated by psychological empowerment in cultures with low power distance ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) than in those with high power distance ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$). The authors propose that empowerment mechanisms work more effectively in cultures that favor participative approaches.

Individualism-Collectivism Dynamics

In individualistic cultures, the effects of transformational leadership were slightly more pronounced ($r = 0.68$, 95% CI 0.64, 0.72) compared to collectivistic cultures ($r = 0.59$, 95% CI 0.55, 0.63). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of different transformational leadership components varied across this cultural spectrum.

A study conducted by Williams and Rodriguez (2024), which involved 2,341 employees from both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, revealed that intellectual stimulation had a more pronounced effect in individualistic cultures ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), whereas inspirational motivation had a stronger influence in collectivistic settings ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that cultural values play a role in determining which transformational behaviors are most effective for boosting engagement.

Uncertainty Avoidance Implications

In cultures characterized by low uncertainty avoidance, the connection between transformational leadership and engagement is typically stronger ($r = 0.69$, 95% CI 0.65, 0.73), compared to those with high uncertainty avoidance, where the relationship is weaker ($r = 0.55$, 95% CI 0.51, 0.59). This trend seems linked to such cultures' higher receptivity to change-focused and innovative

leadership methods, attributed to their greater tolerance for ambiguity.

Gender Dynamics in Cross-Cultural Leadership

The impact of gender on the effectiveness of transformational leadership showed notable interaction with cultural dimensions, uncovering intricate patterns that challenge straightforward gender stereotype assumptions.

Table 3 Gender and Cultural Interactions in Leadership Effectiveness

Cultural Context	Female Leaders (β)	Male Leaders (β)	Gender Gap	Significance
Low Power Distance	0.42	0.38	0.04	$p < 0.05$
High Power Distance	0.31	0.45	0.14	$p < 0.001$
Individualistic	0.36	0.41	0.05	ns
Collectivistic	0.44	0.35	0.09	$p < 0.01$
Feminine Cultures	0.48	0.29	0.19	$p < 0.001$
Masculine Cultures	0.28	0.44	0.16	$p < 0.001$

Female Leadership Effectiveness

In certain cultural settings, women leaders exhibited greater effectiveness in transformational leadership, especially within societies characterized by low power distance ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) and collectivism ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$). This benefit seems to arise from cultural values that resonate with conventionally feminine leadership traits, including collaboration, empathy, and participative decision-making.

An extensive research conducted by Zhang and Johnson (2024), which included 1,856 employees from 12 different nations, revealed that female leaders attained better engagement results by exhibiting greater individualized consideration ($d = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$) and inspirational motivation ($d = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). These effects were most pronounced in cultures characterized by low masculinity values and high gender egalitarianism.

Cultural intelligence has become an essential factor in determining the success of female leaders. Those with high cultural intelligence ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$) outperformed their peers with moderate cultural intelligence ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that the ability to adapt to different cultures is especially crucial for female leaders working in diverse settings.

Male Leadership Effectiveness

In environments characterized by high power distance ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$) and cultures with masculine traits ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), male leaders demonstrated notable benefits, as these settings often embrace conventional authoritative leadership styles. Nonetheless, these benefits were waning among younger, more educated, and urban demographics within these cultural settings.

A study by Kumar and Thompson (2023), which focused on male leaders in various

cultural settings, discovered that idealized influence and intellectual stimulation were the main contributors to their success. These effects were more pronounced in cultures that valued hierarchy and achievement. Male leaders who modified their approach to include more participative elements experienced improved results across all cultural environments.

Gender Composition Effects

Teams led by both men and women consistently demonstrated better engagement outcomes than teams led by a single gender. The best results were seen when women made up 40-60% of leadership roles. A meta-

analysis conducted by Anderson and colleagues in 2024 revealed that leadership teams with gender diversity scored 23% higher in engagement and had 18% improved performance outcomes compared to uniform teams.

Psychological Empowerment as Mediating Mechanism

Psychological empowerment was identified as the most influential mediating factor in the relationship between transformational leadership and engagement, with notable cultural differences in both the strength and the pattern of these mediation effects.

Table 4 Cultural Variations in Psychological Empowerment Mediation

Cultural Dimension	Meaning (β)	Competence (β)	Self-Determination (β)	Impact (β)	Total Indirect Effect
Low Power Distance	0.28	0.34	0.41	0.31	0.52
High Power Distance	0.43	0.22	0.19	0.26	0.38
Individualistic	0.24	0.39	0.42	0.28	0.48
Collectivistic	0.31	0.29	0.23	0.37	0.44

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Meaning Dimension Variations

In cultures with high power distance, the significance aspect of psychological empowerment demonstrated stronger mediating effects ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$) than in cultures with low power distance ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). This trend indicates that the meaningfulness of work becomes especially crucial in hierarchical settings where alternative forms of empowerment might be limited.

A cross-cultural study conducted by Lee and Patel (2023), which included 1,492 employees from 18 different countries, revealed that in cultures characterized by high power distance and uncertainty avoidance, transformational leaders who clearly communicated the

organization's purpose and each individual's role were more successful in fostering empowerment based on meaning.

Self-Determination Cultural Patterns

In cultures that prioritize individualism, self-determination exhibited the most significant mediation effects ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), as well as in cultures with a low power distance ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), both of which resonate with values that highlight personal autonomy and decision-making authority. In collectivist societies, while the mediation effect of self-determination was less pronounced ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$), it still held importance.

Impact Dimension Differences

The dimension of impact revealed intriguing cultural differences, showing more pronounced effects in collectivistic societies ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), where collective influence might be held in higher regard compared to individual impact. This discovery challenges Western-focused assumptions regarding empowerment, indicating that collective efficacy might hold

greater significance than individual impact within certain cultural frameworks.

Cultural Intelligence as Moderating Factor

Cultural intelligence repeatedly stood out as an essential factor influencing the effectiveness of leadership in various settings, with leaders possessing high CQ attaining exceptional results, regardless of their gender or cultural background.

Table 5 Cultural Intelligence Moderation Effects

Leadership Outcome	Low CQ (β)	Moderate CQ (β)	High CQ (β)	CQ Moderation Effect
Work Engagement	0.28	0.41	0.51	0.23
Team Performance	0.31	0.43	0.56	0.25
Innovation	0.24	0.38	0.49	0.21
Retention	0.29	0.39	0.47	0.18

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

CQ Development and Application

Leaders possessing high cultural intelligence (CQ) showcased an exceptional capacity to adjust transformational actions according to cultural settings, which led to improved success in all performance metrics. A long-term study by Martinez and Kim (2024) revealed that programs aimed at developing CQ led to a 34% boost in the effectiveness of cross-cultural leadership and a 28% rise in team engagement scores.

The behavioral aspect of CQ had the most significant correlation with leadership effectiveness ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), followed by the metacognitive ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), motivational ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$), and cognitive aspects ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the skill of adjusting behavior is more crucial than merely having cultural knowledge.

Gender Differences in CQ Application

Female leaders exhibited minor benefits in the motivational ($d = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$) and behavioral CQ aspects ($d = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$),

whereas male leaders had slight advantages in cognitive CQ ($d = 0.09$, ns). These distinctions might lead to differences in how effectively men and women lead across cultures.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The findings provide several significant contributions to leadership and cross-cultural management theory:

Cultural Contingency of Transformational Leadership:

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is heavily dependent on cultural values, questioning the assumption of its universal applicability. The more pronounced effects seen in cultures characterized by low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance imply that transformational behaviors have the greatest impact when they resonate with cultural norms regarding leader-follower dynamics.

Gender-Culture Interaction Framework:

The intricate ways in which gender and culture interact indicate that basic gender stereotypes fall short in explaining leadership effectiveness. In specific cultural environments characterized by low power distance and collectivism, female leaders often excel, implying that cultural values influence the impact of gender on leadership.

Empowerment Mechanism Variations: The varying mediation patterns of psychological empowerment dimensions among different cultures suggest that empowerment functions as a culture-specific process rather than a universal concept. In cultures with high power distance, the more significant impact of meaning indicates that empowerment rooted in purpose may be more effective than autonomy-focused strategies within hierarchical settings.

Cultural Intelligence as Meta-Competency:

The uniform moderating influence of cultural intelligence (CQ) across various cultural settings indicates that CQ operates as a meta-competency, improving the effectiveness of other leadership behaviors. This insight advocates for the cultivation of CQ as a fundamental leadership skill within global organizations.

Practical Implications

Organizations operating in multi-cultural environments should consider several practical applications:

Culturally-Adaptive Leadership

Development: Training programs should emphasize cultural adaptation skills rather than universal leadership principles. Leaders should be trained to diagnose cultural contexts and adapt their transformational behaviors accordingly.

Gender-Inclusive Leadership Strategies:

Organizations should recognize that leadership effectiveness varies by gender across cultural contexts and develop gender-inclusive approaches that leverage the

strengths of both male and female leaders in appropriate cultural settings.

Context-Specific Empowerment

Interventions: Empowerment initiatives should be tailored to cultural contexts, emphasizing meaning and purpose in hierarchical cultures while focusing on autonomy and self-determination in egalitarian contexts.

Cultural Intelligence Assessment and Development:

Organizations should incorporate CQ assessment into leadership selection processes and provide systematic CQ development opportunities for leaders operating in diverse environments.

Limitations and Future Research

This review faces several limitations that suggest directions for future research:

Publication Bias: The focus on published studies may overestimate positive relationships and underrepresent null findings. Future research should examine unpublished studies and failed interventions to provide more balanced perspectives.

Cultural Dimension Oversimplification:

The use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions may oversimplify complex cultural realities and ignore within-culture variations. Future research should employ more nuanced cultural measurement approaches and examine sub-cultural variations.

Longitudinal Evidence:

Most studies employed cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inferences. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to establish causality and examine how cultural and gender effects change over time.

Emerging Cultural Contexts:

The review focused on established cultural frameworks but emerging contexts such as virtual teams, hybrid work environments, and digital transformation may create new cultural dynamics requiring investigation.

Intersectionality Considerations: Future research should examine how gender

intersects with other demographic factors (age, ethnicity, education) to influence leadership effectiveness across cultural contexts.

Conclusions

This in-depth analysis offers proof of the cultural dependence of transformational leadership's success, uncovering intricate interaction patterns among leadership, gender, and culture that affect work engagement results. The evidence indicates that successful leadership in multicultural organizations demands a nuanced grasp of cultural values, gender dynamics, and contextual elements rather than a reliance on universally applicable leadership principles.

Cultural Values Significantly Moderate Leadership Effectiveness: Transformational leadership is most effective in cultures characterized by low power distance and minimal uncertainty avoidance. Its impact lessens in environments that are hierarchical and risk-averse.

Gender Effects are Culturally Contingent: Female leaders tend to excel in societies that prioritize equality and group cohesion, whereas male leaders often perform better in cultures that are hierarchical and emphasize traditional masculinity. These trends question straightforward assumptions about gender stereotypes.

Psychological Empowerment Mechanisms Vary Culturally: The various dimensions of psychological empowerment serve as intermediaries in the relationship between leadership and engagement, influenced by cultural values. In hierarchical cultures, the sense of meaning holds greater significance, whereas in individualistic settings, self-determination has a more pronounced impact.

Cultural Intelligence Functions as Meta-Competency: Leaders with high cultural intelligence attain exceptional results, irrespective of their gender or cultural origins, indicating that the ability to adapt culturally is essential for effective leadership in diverse settings.

Multi-Level Interactions Require Complex Understanding: The three-way interactions between leadership style, gender, and culture require sophisticated approaches to leadership development and organizational design that go beyond simple universal principles.

For professionals in the field, these results highlight the importance of adopting culturally-aware leadership methods that acknowledge the intricate relationship between personal traits, behavioral patterns, and situational elements. To improve leadership success in varied settings, organizations should focus on fostering cultural intelligence, introduce leadership training that adapts to cultural nuances, and create empowerment programs that are consistent with cultural norms and anticipations.

Future studies ought to persist in exploring these intricate relationships, broadening their scope to encompass new organizational settings and demographic factors. As global workforces become more diverse and work arrangements evolve, there is a continuous demand for a nuanced comprehension of leadership effectiveness that transcends cultural and demographic divides.

The consequences go beyond the effectiveness of individual leaders and also include organizational structure, team makeup, and strategic choices within global companies. As firms persist in their efforts to globalize and diversify, being adept at managing cultural and gender dynamics in leadership becomes all the more crucial for the success and longevity of an organization.

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