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CULTURAL VALUES AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL TRADITIONS IN MODERN MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Leadership practices within modern management systems are deeply shaped by historically rooted cultural values, yet leadership research continues to be dominated by universalist models that overlook cultural and historical context. This study examines the influence of cultural values derived from historical traditions on leadership practices through a cross-national comparative analysis. Using secondary data from the World Values Survey aggregated at the country level, the study adopts a quantitative research design to explore how enduring cultural value orientations are associated with leadership-related orientations across societies. Cultural values related to tradition, authority, and self-expression are operationalized as key predictors of leadership practices conceptualized as value-driven orientations rather than individual managerial behaviors. The findings reveal substantial cross-national variation in both cultural values and leadership orientations, with strong and statistically significant associations between cultural value dimensions and leadership-related orientations. In particular, self-expression-oriented cultural contexts demonstrate leadership orientations that emphasize autonomy, participation, and adaptive authority structures. These results provide empirical support for culturally embedded leadership theory and highlight the persistence of historical traditions in shaping contemporary leadership practices despite globalization and institutional convergence. The study contributes to leadership and management scholarship by integrating cultural theory with large-scale comparative data and offers practical insights for culturally informed leadership development in diverse organizational contexts.

KEYWORDS: Cultural values, Leadership practices, Historical traditions, World Values Survey, Cross-cultural management, Cultural persistence, Management systems, Comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Leadership practices do not exist independently of the cultural and historical environments in which they are enacted. Leadership is not universal or neutral, instead it is influenced by upper-level social norms, belief systems, and cultural traditions that affect the meaning of authority, responsibility, and influence across different societies (Bottery, 2006; Vilas-Boas et al., 2018). Leadership is a socially constructed and culturally situated practice instead of an essentially technical or managerial one and as such, the symbolic and normative frameworks of leadership behaviors are construed, perceived, or rejected in the light of cultural contexts (Dwairy, 2019).

Although the modern management systems are growing with the focus on efficiency, innovativeness, and the formalized organizational structure, the cultural traditions can be perceived in the leadership practices. The techniques of hierarchy, obedience, collectivism, and moral responsibility common in the past are frequently replicated in the modern organizations, which predetermines the expectations of leadership and managerial decision-making procedures (Wahyudin, 2015; Ertosun and Adiguzel, 2018). These continuities imply that the contemporary management systems do not overrule the cultural traditions but simply reinterpret them and fit them in new institutional and economical settings. With the growth of organizations beyond national and cultural borders, it is becoming more and more important that the cultural basis of leadership is comprehended in order to manage effectively in a globalized world (Thomas and Peterson, 2016).

The cultural values as such are the historical, religious, philosophical and social traditions that are cumulative and develop over periods of time (Klamer, 2003). Despite the changes in the societal political, economic, and technological contexts, cultural values manifest a significant level of stability, as they could affect social institutions and norms of behavior despite their historical backgrounds (Cirone and Pepinsky, 2022). Leadership practices, especially, can be an effective channel where the historical values can be passed on into the modern organizational settings. The principles of power, legitimacy, moral behavior, and shared accountability are usually based on very strong cultural customs that define the way leadership is practiced and assessed (Dwairy, 2019). Historically based cultural values are transmitted to modern day leadership practices in various ways such as socialization, education, institutional continuity and collective cultural narrative (Cirone and Pepinsky, 2022). Leadership orientations

prevalent in organizations that promote flexibility and innovation often have something about the traditional cultural frameworks in them, which has a legacy of assumptions about how power works and how social order should be (Vilas-Boas et al., 2018). The cultural perspective on leadership undermines the universalist ideas and emphasizes the need to have more contextualized leadership models that would take into consideration the historical and cultural diversity (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2021). Nevertheless, a significant part of the hegemonic leadership literature is based on western theoretical frameworks that emphasize individualism, rational decision-making, and normalization of leadership competencies (Macpherson, 2025; Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2021). Although these models have made a strong contribution to the theory of leadership, their global application has been more and more questioned, especially in non-Western and culturally diverse societies. This excessive dependence on western models of leadership is dangerous in that the history of the past and cultural values is likely to be used in the determination of leadership in various societies.

Moreover, despite the focus on the cultural aspects of leadership in the works of conceptual and qualitative studies, empirical research studying the connection between past cultural values and modern leadership orientations throughout nations in a systematic manner is relatively scarce (Dwairy, 2019; Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023). Current research mostly relates to organizational or case-specific situations which restrict them in the ability to generalize across cross-national trends of cultural impact. The given gap highlights the necessity of conducting comparative research in the context of using high-quality and substantial datasets to examine how deep-rooted cultural traditions still influence the leadership practices in the framework of contemporary management systems.

In response to this gap, the current study will take a comparative approach and explore how cultural values that have historically been culturally related have affected leadership practice within different countries. Through the application of the mass secondary data on cultural values, this study aims to add to the culturally based leadership literature as well as promote the knowledge of the implications of past traditions in modern management systems (Figure 1). Through this, the study does not only give the contribution of the theory to the cultural foundation of leadership, but also the contribution of the practical to the culturally conscious leadership development in a world that is gradually transforming into a global village.

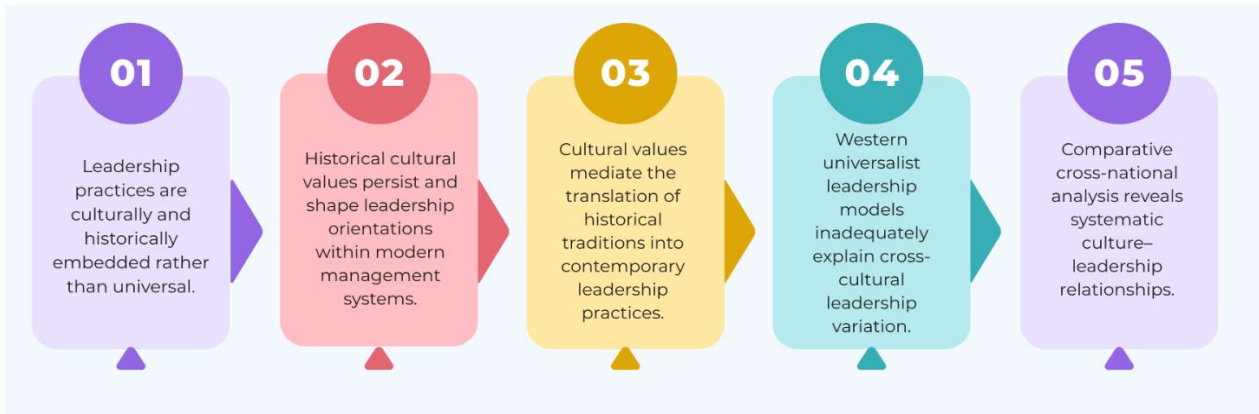


Figure 1: Conceptual Map of Cultural Values and Leadership Practices

The figure illustrates the study's conceptual logic, showing how historically rooted cultural values persist within modern management systems, mediate leadership practices, challenge universalist models, and are empirically examined through comparative cross-national analysis.

Accordingly, this research pursues the following objectives:

1. To examine cross-national variations in cultural values rooted in historical traditions using large-scale comparative data
2. To analyze the relationship between historically embedded cultural values and leadership-related orientations within modern management systems
3. To identify and compare cultural patterns that explain differences in leadership practices across countries and regions

2. Literature Review

The learning in leadership scholarship has come to appreciate that leadership practices are culturally constructed, as opposed to being universally applicable across situations. The cultural theory focuses on the importance of expecting leadership based on the common norms, symbols, and shared meanings that define the meaning of authority and responsibility in the societies (Wildavsky et al., 2018). In this light, leadership does not only exist as a personal feature but as a socially constructed one, which is tinged with the cultural beliefs of hierarchical, participatory and morally correct leadership features. Cross-cultural research shows that the expectations of leadership in different cultures also differ greatly, specifically in terms of power distance, gender roles, and the collectivist orientations (Snaebjornsson et al., 2015).

Also, leadership is commonly theorized as a socially routed process, which is informed by constant dynamics among leaders, followers, and institutional settings (Peters, 2012). Social embeddedness is that

leadership action cannot be completely understood without reference to cultural and historical contexts within which they are practiced. Instead of adhering to general managerial standards, the leaders work in culturally concrete structures that have a certain impact on decision-making processes, ethical decisions, and relationships within an organization. This embeddedness questions universalist leadership theories and advocates culturally based practice that stresses on variability of contexts (Wildavsky et al., 2018).

Traditions in the past have been core in the development of cultural values that are still present in the modern management systems. The ideals of leadership and normative expectations on leadership are established and made permanent by religious beliefs, philosophical traditions, and historical experiences, which characterize societies (Kasa, 2025; Wren and Bedeian, 2023). The field of management has been changing in strong relation to general cultural and historical trends and implying that even in the face of structural modernization, modern leadership practices still have remnants of the old value systems (Wren and Bedeian, 2023). Such traditions determine presumptions about authority, obedience, common responsibility, and ethical behavior which are still present in the organizational context.

Most recent studies indicate that the continuation of traditional values is not simply remnant but, in many cases, adaptive, enabling societies to incorporate traditional norms in the contemporary institutional designs (He et al., 2025). This inertia is apparent in leadership practices whereby the traditional values still shape leadership orientations even in technologically advanced and globally integrated organizations (Figure 2). Continuity on this kind of argument supports the view that modern management systems are culturally grounded but not culturally neutral.

The empirical studies are presented with more and more extensive cultural data, which is used to analyse the correlation between cultural values and leadership-related orientations. To measure cross-national differences in values associated with tradition, authority, trust, and social norms, the World Values Survey (WVS) has become an important tool that provides the empirical base to comparative leadership studies (Wildavsky *et al.*, 2018). The study conducted using secondary cultural data evidence indicates that the expectations and organizational conduct regarding leadership greatly rely on the value systems of the societies, which explains why the use of macro-level data is reasonable in the leadership research (Thien *et al.*, 2023).

The secondary data which consists of the WVS is best suited to examine leadership as a value phenomenon to the extent that it allows the researchers to examine

orientations of leadership as secondary data in the context of culturally situated attitudes and beliefs. Such an approach can be applied along with qualitative and organizational-level research so that some cross-national comparisons could be done systematically and the greater cultural trends could be uncovered (Snaebjornsson *et al.*, 2015). Theoretically speaking, leadership orientations are determined by cultural values, which, in their turn, direct management practices, and hence leadership can be described as a mediating variable between the past and present organizational systems (Peters, 2012; Thien *et al.*, 2023). This value based model offers a theoretically based premise on the way the historical cultural practices would still shape leadership practices in contemporary management regimes.

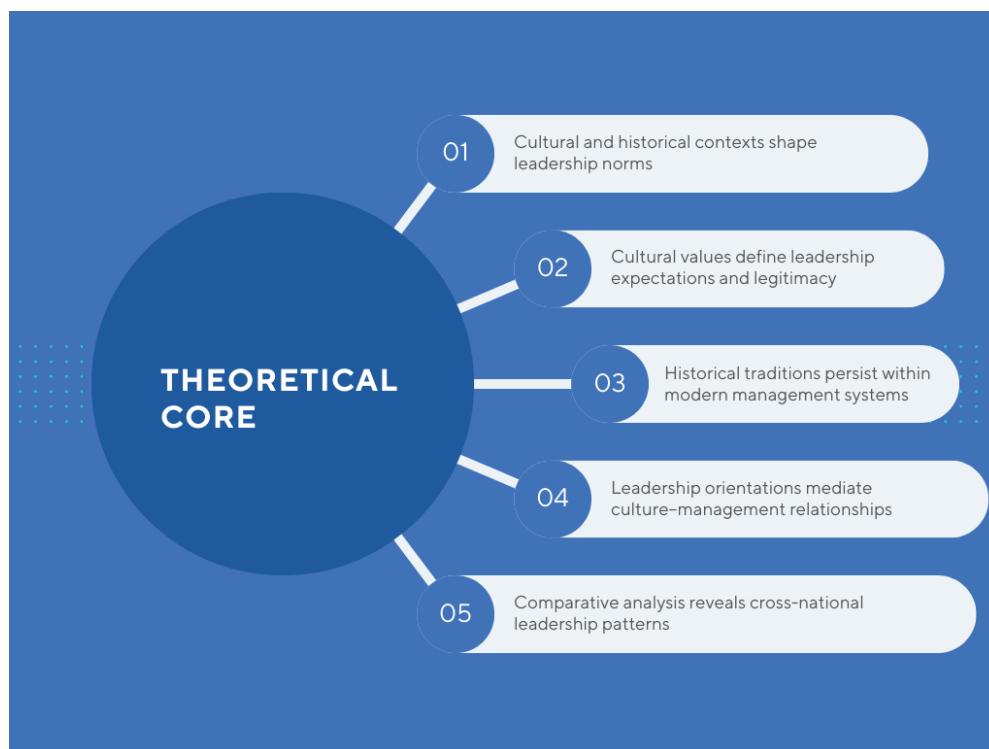


Figure 2: Theoretical Core Linking Cultural Values and Leadership Practices

The figure presents the theoretical core of the study, illustrating how cultural and historical contexts shape leadership norms, mediate leadership orientations within modern management systems, and enable comparative analysis of cross-national leadership patterns.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The proposed study uses a cross-national comparative study as a quantitative research design

by utilizing the background of cultural values to investigate the role of historically entrenched cultural values in leadership practices of the contemporary management systems. It takes a macro-level approach to take into account culturally embedded leadership orientations across societies and not on specific leadership behaviors.

3.2 Data Source

This research is based on secondary data, the World Values Survey (WVS) which is a well-known world

dataset on comparative cultural research. Aggregated data on country-level were extracted out of the dataset, which comprises standardized measures of cultural values in various countries. The data set allows making systematic cross-national comparison and guarantees the methodological consistency.

3.3 Variables and Measurement

Cultural values are the independent variables and operationalized using WVS indicators of enduring cultural orientations such as traditional versus secular values, attitudes toward authority and obedience, collectivism versus individualism, social trust and work-related values. These dimensions are cultural traditions that are historically entrenched.

Indirectly, the leadership practices are looked at via leadership-related orientations that are used as dependent variables. All these orientations are measured based on WVS indicators that are linked to authority acceptance, hierarchical preference, autonomy in decision making and expectations related with the roles. This method of thinking about leadership is based on the idea that it is a culturally entrenched, value-driven phenomenon.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of data is performed in several phases. The evaluation of the cultural values and leadership orientations related differences is initially performed with the help of descriptive statistics. Correlation

analysis is then used to study relationships between cultural values and orientations of leadership. Lastly, multivariate analysis like regression or cluster analysis is also used to determine cultural patterns of leadership among countries.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study does not rely on any primary sources and uses anonymized secondary data only that are publicly accessible. Since there was no primary data gathering or any communication with human subjects, there was no need to seek the ethical approval. The research is in compliance with the instructions of using the data in the World Values Survey.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Cultural Values and Leadership Orientations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables: traditional-rational cultural values (TRADRAT5), survival-self-expression values (survself), and the composite leadership-orientation index. The findings depict high cross-national differences in all the variables which means that there is significant cultural and leadership variations between nations. There is a moderate dispersion in leadership orientations, which implies that there is a systematic variation as opposed to random dispersion (Figure 3).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
TRADRAT5	195	0.70	0.262	0.224	1.489
Survival-self	195	0.683	0.279	0.302	1.657
Leadership Orientation	234	0.41	0.115	0.205	0.741

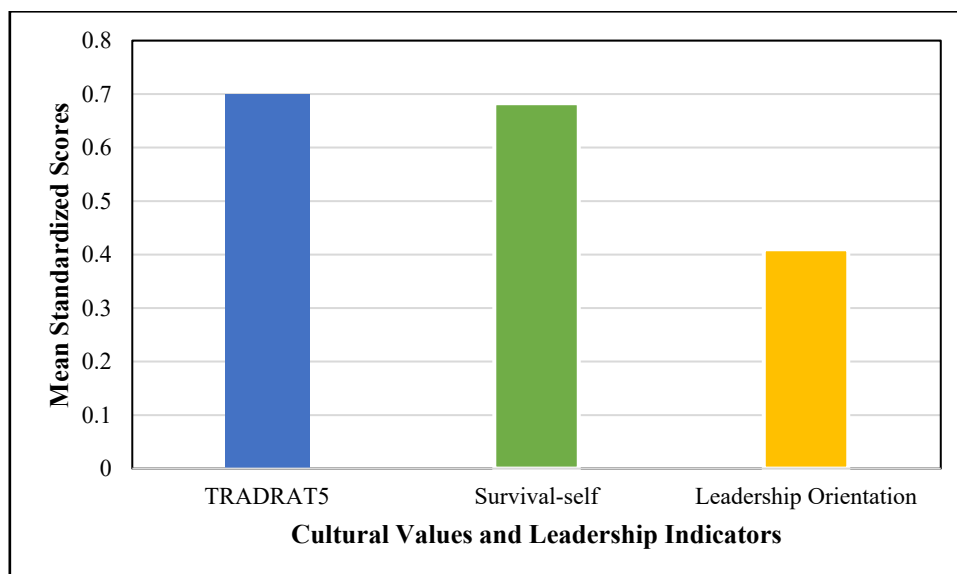


Figure 3: Mean Cultural Value Dimensions and Leadership Orientation Across Countries

The figure compares average country-level scores for traditional-rational values, survival-self-expression values, and leadership orientation, illustrating cross-national differences in cultural value dimensions and their relative association with leadership orientations within modern management systems.

4.2 Cross-National Variation in Cultural Values

Table 1 shows that, both cultural value dimensions exhibit extensive cross-national dispersion. The nations vary significantly with reference to orientation towards traditional and rational values and survival versus self-expression values. The difference is indicative of the continuation of the traditional cultural practices within the societies at

historical stages as well as offering an empirical basis of comparative leadership study.

4.3 Relationship Between Cultural Values and Leadership Orientations

Table 2 indicates Pearson correlation coefficients of cultural values and leader-related orientations. TRADRAT5 and survself have a positive and significant correlation with leadership orientations. The relationship is especially high on the survival-self-expression values, which indicates that those societies that have stronger self-expression values have their own leadership orientations that are more in line with the participative and autonomy-supportive practices.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	TRADRAT5	Survival-self	Leadership Orientation
TRADRAT5	1.000	0.474	0.591
survself	0.474	1.000	0.885
Leadership Orientation	0.591	0.885	1.000

4.4 Cultural Values as Predictors of Leadership Orientations

Table 2 has reported strong correlations, which imply that cultural values are significant predictors of leadership-related orientations on a country level. The values of survival and self-expression are the most related with leadership orientations which reflect the significance of cultural backgrounds which focus on autonomy, participation, and self-determination in forming leadership expectation within modern organisations of management.

4.5 Summary of Key Findings

Generally, the findings show that cultural values that have historical roots have a close relation with leadership orientations in various countries. The descriptive and correlational results make this combination prove that the practices of leadership, which can be defined as orientations that are value-driven, are systematically different across the cultural contexts. The findings are empirical as they support the conceptual framework of the study that cultural values relate to leadership practices in the contemporary management systems.

5. Discussion

This research has produced compelling empirical evidence in support of the thesis statement that cultural values that are historically based strongly influence leadership practices in contemporary management systems. The cross-national variation on leadership-related orientations would be a feature of permanent cultural difference and not an

accidental event or an institutional effect. The results prove the point that leadership is a value-based phenomenon, which is conditioned by bigger societal trends which define the rules of power, engagement, and responsibility (Lichtenstein, 2012; Peters, 2012).

The close connection between the cultural dimension of value and leadership orientations, especially the strong effect of the values of survival and self-expression is one of the most noticeable results. The leadership orientations found in countries with greater self-expression values included autonomy, participatory decision making and adaptive authority patterns. Such a tendency conforms to the previous studies that have shown that leadership activity is informed by national societal culture, which shapes the ways of exercising and assessing leadership functions in companies (Bellibaş & Kılınc, 2023). Based on these findings, it is difficult to understand leadership practices in contexts other than the cultural setting where they occur.

Another factor that assists in underscoring the fact that culture should be considered a continuity factor in the development of social and organizational life is the presence of the traditional cultural values among the countries. Despite the development of globalisation and institutional modernization, the impact of cultural traditions on the expectations of the leadership and management practices remains (Ziyatbay, 2024). This continuity explains the fact that cultural values are not simply the things that belong to the past but serve as the ever-present standards that

serve to guide the behavior of the line. This stubbornness can be applied to support the idea that leadership models which are designed to be applied in one culture cannot be transferred to different cultures with ease without having to be changed in line with the cultural environment.

The findings also show the similarity of the institutional and contextual issues in determining the leadership practices, particularly in the emerging and the transitioning economies. Institutional settings interact with cultural values to shape leadership orientations and determine how power of authority can be effective and how change in an organization may be implemented (Rottig, 2016). At that, the leadership practices can be seen as cultural practices in addition to the adaptive responses to the institutional constraints and opportunities. This finding has important implications on the multinational organization and cross-cultural management that the efficacy of the leadership is grounded on the suitability of the leadership style to the local cultural and institutional environment.

According to the perception of adaptive leadership, the findings suggest that the response of effective leadership in modern management systems requires cultural intelligence and contextually-oriented leadership. Adaptive leadership is the process of identifying cultural differences and modifying leadership behaviors, especially in the cross-border or multi-cultural setting (Endzinaitė, 2024; Jugdev, 2022). The close correlation between cultural values and leadership orientations that this research has revealed supports the importance of leadership development initiatives based on cultural sensitivity and flexibility as opposed to generic leadership skills. The research can also add to the literature about cultural change by showing that cultural values are changing not at once but in a gradual process, and these changes are reflected in leadership practices both in being continuous and in changing. According to research about cultural change, even though a society may experience shifts in values over time, such shifts are usually gradual and influenced by the existing cultural models (Hamamura, 2018). Likewise, the stability and gradual change of personality and value orientations at the societal level indicate that the changes in leadership practices are determined by long-term cultural orientations, although they evolve in new circumstances (Chopik and Kitayama, 2018).

The research contributes to the leadership literature because it provides empirical evidence that cultural values are the key to leadership practices between

nations. Combining cultural theory and massive comparative data, the results undermine universalist approaches to leadership and affirm a culturally immanent explanation of leadership. The findings highlight the significance of identifying historical traditions and social values as the basic components of leadership processes in the contemporary management systems providing not only theoretical information but also practical recommendations to the culturally conscious development of leadership.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the influence of historically rooted cultural values on leadership practices within modern management systems through a comparative, cross-national analysis. The results show that leadership practices which are formed as leadership-related orientations differ systematically between countries in line with traditional cultural patterns of values supporting the perception of leadership being a value-oriented and culturally embedded phenomenon. Through empirical connection of cultural values with leadership orientations, the study brings to light the issue of how historical traditions support the current leadership expectations in spite of the growing globalization and convergence of institutions. The findings are a challenge to the universalist leadership models because they demonstrate that leadership practices are highly determined by societal norms regarding authority, independence and shared responsibility. This cultural entrenchment suggests that the definition of good leadership and its cultivation is not interpretable or cultivable out of historical and cultural context. The literature may be significant to the area of leadership and management as it may bring together the cultural theory with vast comparative data and give macro level perspective of how cultural continuity influences leadership practices in modern organizations. Practically speaking, the findings indicate the importance of culturally sensitive leadership development and this is particularly true in organizations whose operations take place in varying cultural environment. Having the knowledge of the long-term impact of cultural values, organizations and policy makers will be in a better position to develop adaptive and context sensitive leadership strategies that can be applicable to the local cultural demands. The future research can build up on this method by considering the organizational or cross-temporal data to further explore the dynamicity of the interaction between culture and leadership.

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