

EMPIRICAL ARTICLE

Flexible Leadership: Bridging Gender Dynamics and Enhancing Enterprise Performance

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Abstract

Purpose - This study investigates the impact of flexible leadership on enterprise performance, focusing on female entrepreneurs in China. It aims to examine the moderating roles of gender, enterprise size, and power distance, contributing to leadership theory and practice in non-Western contexts.

Design/Methodology/Approach - The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data from 218 structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test hypotheses related to flexible leadership, organizational performance, and contextual moderators.

Findings - The results confirm that flexible leadership positively influences both organizational and employee performance. Gender moderates this relationship, with female entrepreneurs leveraging flexible leadership to achieve higher performance outcomes despite systemic barriers. Enterprise size and power distance significantly influence the effectiveness of flexible leadership, highlighting the need for context-sensitive strategies.

Practical Implications - This study offers actionable insights for female entrepreneurs and organizational leaders. Flexible leadership, characterized by inclusivity, empowerment, and adaptability, is shown to mitigate cultural and structural challenges. Tailored leadership approaches based on organizational size and cultural context can further enhance performance.

Originality/Value - The study advances leadership theory by operationalizing flexible leadership in a non-Western context and integrating gender and situational variables. It provides a validated measurement model for flexible leadership and offers empirical evidence of its efficacy in addressing gendered and cultural dynamics in entrepreneurship.

KEYWORDS

Flexible Leadership, Female Entrepreneurs, Enterprise Performance, Leadership Theory, Power Distance, Contingency Theory.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of the global economy, coupled with challenges due to sustainability pressures (Boyer 2024) and digital transformation (Desmarchelier 2024), has significantly transformed the landscape for female entrepreneurs. As China continues its ascent as a global economic powerhouse, the role of women in entrepreneurship has grown exponentially, driven by increased access to education and societal shifts challenging traditional gender norms. Moreover, the widespread

adoption of the Internet has democratized access to vital resources such as information, funding, and social networks, enabling women to actively participate in entrepreneurial ventures across diverse industries. Amid these developments, female entrepreneurs have emerged as influential leaders, showcasing exceptional capabilities that contribute to innovation, growth, and societal progress (Chen et al. 2006).

However, despite their growing economic contributions, female entrepreneurs in China continue to navigate a corporate landscape steeped in male-dominated structures. This environment is often characterized by systemic challenges, including gender biases and structural

barriers such as the "glass ceiling" (Eagly 2005, Acker 1990). These barriers underscore the urgent need for leadership approaches that not only empower female entrepreneurs but also enable them to overcome societal and organizational constraints to achieve sustained success.

Leadership research has extensively explored the impact of different styles on organizational performance, with flexible leadership—emphasizing adaptability, inclusivity, and employee empowerment—garnering particular attention (Arhin and Cobblah 2024). Deliberative approaches to decision-making with an emphasis on inclusivity and adaptability provide benefits in dynamic contexts (Lissillour and Ruel 2023). However, much of this research is rooted in Western contexts, limiting its applicability to the unique cultural, organizational, and societal dynamics of non-Western settings. Moreover, studies on gender and leadership often highlight traits such as participatory and interpersonal approaches among female leaders (Rosener 1990) but lack empirical validation, particularly in emerging economies like China.

Additionally, situational factors such as enterprise size and cultural dimensions like power distance remain underexplored in the context of leadership effectiveness (Fiedler 1964). While contingency theories suggest that effective leadership depends on aligning styles with organizational and cultural contexts, few studies integrate these factors into analyses of flexible leadership, especially in the context of female entrepreneurship (Epitropaki et al. 2013, Dinh and Lord 2012). This study aims to bridge these gaps by:

1. Providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of flexible leadership in improving employee and organizational performance within the context of female entrepreneurship in China.
2. Examining gender dynamics to challenge prevailing stereotypes and explore how gender moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and organizational performance.
3. Integrating situational variables, such as enterprise size and power distance, to offer a nuanced understanding of when and how flexible leadership is most effective.

In the spirit of Indigenous Scholarship (Rodriguez-Escobar 2024), this research contributes to both theory and practice by enriching the literature on flexible leadership and female entrepreneurship, particularly in non-Western contexts. The study also provides actionable insights for leaders seeking to navigate complex organizational and cultural dynamics. By emphasizing the interplay between gender, leadership styles, and situational variables, it offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing leadership effectiveness in diverse settings.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: the next section reviews relevant theoretical frameworks and literature, laying the foundation for the research hypotheses. This is followed by the research methodology, detailing the study's data collection, measurement scales, and analytical methods. The results section presents the empirical findings, while the discussion interprets these findings in light of existing

theories and practices. The article concludes by highlighting the practical implications, theoretical contributions, and limitations of the study, alongside directions for future research.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study of leadership theories originates from the field of management, which encompasses four core functions: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Leadership, as a critical management activity, refers to the process where managers influence subordinates' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors through guidance, motivation, and decision-making, striving to achieve organizational goals. This process is widely acknowledged as an indispensable element of effective management as organisations engage in sustainable and digital transformation (Bonet and Lissillour 2023, Guechtouli 2024). Over time, research on leadership has evolved, reflecting changing organizational contexts and societal expectations.

2.1 | Classical Leadership Theories

The foundational leadership theories—trait, behavioral, and contingency theories—emerged during the early 20th century. These classical theories emphasized linking individual leader characteristics and behaviors to organizational outcomes:

1. **Trait Theories:** These theories posited that certain inherent qualities, such as intelligence, decisiveness, and charisma, determined effective leadership (Stogdill 1948).
2. **Behavioral Theories:** A shift from traits to observable actions introduced the focus on task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors (Blake et al. 1968).
3. **Contingency Theories:** Fiedler's Contingency Model Fiedler (1964) introduced the idea that the effectiveness of leadership styles depends on situational factors, such as task structure and leader-member relationships.

While these theories provided foundational insights, they often assumed static environments, making them less adaptable to the complex power dynamics that characterize modern organizations (Lissillour and Monod 2024).

2.2 | Transformational Leadership

With the advent of the post-industrial era, transformational leadership emerged as a key framework, addressing the limitations of classical theories. Introduced by Bass (1990), transformational leadership emphasized inspiring and motivating followers to achieve exceptional outcomes through:

- **Vision:** Creating a shared sense of purpose.
- **Intellectual Stimulation:** Encouraging innovation and creative problem-solving.
- **Individualized Consideration:** Fostering personal development through mentorship.

Sabbah (2024) emphasizes transformational leadership's role in business continuity, aligning with the concept of flexible leadership fostering adaptability and inclusivity. Transformational leadership marked a shift from traditional managerial approaches by focusing on uniting individuals around shared values and inspiring them to transcend transactional exchanges. The framework also laid the groundwork for modern leadership theories, including flexible leadership, by emphasizing adaptability and the human dimension of leadership.

2.3 | Flexible Leadership

Flexible leadership builds upon the principles of transformational leadership by incorporating adaptability to meet the demands of increasingly complex and dynamic organizational contexts. Unlike traditional command-and-control models, flexible leadership thrives on fostering trust, collaboration, and inclusivity, emphasizing:

- **Interactive Leadership Style:** Establishing mutual respect and open communication between leaders and subordinates, thereby enhancing motivation and performance (Helgesen 1995).
- **Group Management and Multi-Role Leadership:** Adopting a range of leadership roles based on situational demands, such as motivator, communicator, and collaborator (Bradford and Cohen 1998).
- **Trust and Autonomy:** Creating an environment conducive to innovation by valuing employees' autonomy and intellectual contributions (Lissillour and Sahut 2022).

Flexible leadership's emphasis on adaptability aligns with the needs of modern organizations, particularly those operating in knowledge-intensive industries or navigating rapid technological changes. Leaders who adopt this style can effectively address the complexities of globalized markets and diverse team dynamics.

2.4 | Female Leadership

Research on gender dynamics in leadership has historically been influenced by the male-centric development of leadership theories. Early studies largely promoted the notion of "gender neutrality," suggesting that leadership effectiveness was independent of gender (Kanter 1977). However, this perspective often ignored the distinct contributions and challenges associated with female leadership.

Subsequent research revealed that female leaders often exhibit traits aligned with flexible leadership principles, such as:

- **Participatory and Relationship-Oriented Styles:** Rosener (1990) highlighted the collaborative and empathetic nature of female leadership.
- **Inclusiveness and Empowerment:** Female leaders tend to foster inclusive environments, valuing diverse perspectives and promoting employee growth (Farh and Cheng 2000).
- **Risk Aversion and Long-Term Vision:** Female entrepreneurs are noted for their cautious decision-making and strategic foresight (Astin and Leland 1990).

Despite these strengths, systemic barriers continue to hinder female leaders' advancement. Key challenges include:

- **Glass Ceiling:** Structural and cultural biases that limit women's access to senior leadership roles (Acker 1990).
- **Glass Cliff:** The tendency for women to be placed in precarious leadership positions during organizational crises, exposing them to higher risks of failure (Ryan and Haslam 2005).

These dynamics emphasize the need for inclusive and adaptive leadership practices that leverage the unique strengths of female leaders while addressing systemic inequities.

Flexible leadership provides an effective framework for addressing the challenges faced by female leaders. By aligning with societal expectations and leveraging traits such as inclusivity and collaboration, flexible leadership can mitigate role incongruence and enhance leadership effectiveness. Moreover, its adaptability makes it a valuable tool for navigating diverse organizational contexts, offering a pathway for female leaders to achieve greater representation and success in corporate environments.

3 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 | The Relationship Between Flexible Leadership and Organizational Performance, Employee Performance

The effectiveness of leadership styles, including flexible leadership, is traditionally evaluated using two primary indicators: performance and emotional responses. Performance can be further divided into objective measures (e.g., financial metrics, productivity) and subjective measures (e.g., peer evaluations, extra effort from employees). Emotional responses include employee satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Bass and Avolio 1994).

Flexible leadership fosters a supportive environment where employees feel valued and empowered, leading to higher productivity and innovation. Its emphasis on inclusiveness and intellectual stimulation aligns with contemporary organizational demands, enabling leaders to adapt to challenges and seize opportunities effectively (Goleman 2000).

Building on these foundations, this study examines the relationship between flexible leadership, organizational performance, and employee performance. It proposes the following hypotheses, each reflecting the dimensions of flexible leadership and their expected impacts:

- **H1:** Flexible leadership is positively related to organizational performance.
 - **H1a:** The "inspirational motivation" of leadership is positively related to organizational performance.
 - **H1b:** The "intellectual stimulation" of leadership is positively related to organizational performance.
 - **H1c:** The "individualized consideration" of leadership is positively related to organizational performance.
 - **H1d:** The "empowerment" by leadership is positively related to organizational performance.
 - **H1e:** The "inclusiveness" of leadership is positively related to organizational performance.

By providing individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, flexible leaders build trust and engagement among employees. This, in turn, enhances job satisfaction, encourages discretionary effort, and promotes higher-quality outcomes. Empirical research has consistently linked such leadership behaviors to improved employee performance (Bass and Avolio 1994, Podsakoff et al. 1990). Arhin and Cobblah (2024) highlight how innovative employee behavior and empowerment mediate the impact of leadership practices on customer satisfaction, suggesting that flexible leadership has a positive impact on employee performance.

- **H2:** Flexible leadership is positively related to employee performance.
 - **H2a:** The "inspirational motivation" by leaders is positively related to employee performance.
 - **H2b:** The "intellectual stimulation" by leaders is positively related to employee performance.
 - **H2c:** The "individualized consideration" by leaders is positively related to employee performance.
 - **H2d:** The "empowerment" by leaders is positively related to employee performance.
 - **H2e:** The "inclusiveness" by leaders is positively related to employee performance.

3.2 | The Mediating Role of Employee Performance Between Flexible Leadership and Organizational Performance

The mediating effect of employee performance in the relationship between leadership style and organizational performance has been extensively examined in prior research. Flexible leadership, with its

emphasis on empowering employees, promoting inclusivity, and fostering individualized consideration, enhances employees' motivation, satisfaction, and productivity (Bass and Avolio 1994, Goleman 2000). By improving these employee-level outcomes, flexible leadership indirectly contributes to broader organizational success.

Previous studies have identified various mediating variables in the relationship between leadership and organizational performance, including employee job satisfaction (Xu 2006), organizational innovation climate (Politis 2004), and employee engagement. These variables highlight the pathways through which leadership behaviors impact organizational outcomes, underscoring the importance of understanding intermediary processes.

In this context, employee performance emerges as a critical mediating factor. Employee performance encompasses behaviors and outputs that contribute directly to organizational goals, including productivity, innovation, and quality of work (Arhin and Cobblah 2024). The mediating role of employee performance is supported by the transformational leadership literature, which highlights the capacity of leadership behaviors to enhance employee outcomes and, subsequently, organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff et al. 1990). Flexible leadership, with its multidimensional approach, aligns closely with these principles, fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement that drives superior performance at all levels.

Furthermore, the concept of social capital within organizations provides additional support for the mediating role of employee performance. By leveraging social networks, flexible leadership enhances information sharing, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are critical drivers of employee and organizational performance (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). Building on this theoretical foundation, this study posits that flexible leadership does not directly influence organizational performance. Instead, its impact is mediated by employee performance, which serves as a conduit through which leadership behaviors are translated into organizational success. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- **H3:** Employee performance mediates the positive relationship between flexible leadership and organizational performance.

3.3 | The Relationship Between Entrepreneur Gender, Flexible Leadership, and Corporate Performance

Research on female leadership and flexible leadership has shown a connection in external manifestations. Female entrepreneurs' leadership styles can be categorized into two types: one that matches their gender characteristics (democratic, empowering, participatory, relationship-oriented, and transformational) and one that mimics male leadership styles (autocratic, task-oriented, and transactional leadership). The former aligns with flexible leadership.

Most scholars support the notion that female entrepreneurs adopt leadership styles (transformational and relationship-oriented leadership) that match their gender characteristics. Helgesen (1995) suggested that female leaders prefer interpersonal-oriented leadership styles. Rosener (1990) noted that the management style of female leaders, influenced by female-specific traits, exhibits more human care. Combining existing research, differences in female leadership can be seen in five aspects:

- **Interactive leadership style:** Participative, democratic, and interpersonal relationship-oriented (Helgesen 1995).
- **Inclusive organizational relationship networks:** Building inclusive networks within organizations (Helgesen 1995).
- **Diverse and complex thinking methods:** Female leaders tend to employ diverse and complex thinking (Graham 2002).
- **Empowerment and organization establishment:** Establishing empowered and well-structured organizations (Appold 1990).
- **Focus on personalized care:** Attending to the unique needs and aspirations of individuals (Farh and Cheng 2000).
- **Risk avoidance:** Demonstrating cautious and strategic foresight in decision-making (Astin and Leland 1990).

All these attributes correspond to the essence of flexible leadership. Overall, most existing research supports the view that compared to male entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs are more caring, inclusive, and inclined to adopt transformational leadership and relationship-oriented leadership. Based on this review, the following model was constructed, and corresponding hypotheses were proposed:

- **H4:** The level of flexible leadership in female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than in male entrepreneurs.
 - **H4a:** The "inspirational motivation" of female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that of male entrepreneurs.
 - **H4b:** The "intellectual stimulation" of female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that of male entrepreneurs.
 - **H4c:** The "individualized consideration" of female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that of male entrepreneurs.
 - **H4d:** The "empowerment" of female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that of male entrepreneurs.
 - **H4e:** The "inclusiveness" of female entrepreneurs is significantly higher than that of male entrepreneurs.

While female entrepreneurs remain a minority, research consistently highlights the distinct advantages they bring to corporate performance. Compared to their male counterparts, female entrepreneurs often exhibit leadership traits such as meticulousness, empathy, inclusivity, and long-term foresight (Rosener 1990, Eagly and Karau 2002). These characteristics align with transformational leadership and flexible leadership styles, which have been shown to positively influence organizational

outcomes Bass and Avolio (1994). Female entrepreneurs are also recognized for their cautious and calculated approach to decision-making, enabling more sustainable and resilient business strategies.

Empirical studies suggest that the presence of female entrepreneurs in leadership positions can enhance corporate performance across multiple dimensions, including financial outcomes, employee engagement, and organizational reputation. Female-led firms often demonstrate stronger risk management practices, higher levels of employee satisfaction, and greater adaptability to changing market conditions (Helgesen 1995, Rosener 1990).

These advantages stem from female leaders' ability to foster inclusive environments, encourage diverse perspectives, and build robust organizational networks.

Despite these strengths, female entrepreneurs continue to encounter systemic obstacles in achieving parity with their male peers. These challenges include limited access to capital, entrenched gender biases, and a lack of mentorship opportunities.

However, the increasing recognition of gender diversity as a driver of corporate performance presents a significant opportunity for female entrepreneurs. Organizations that embrace gender-inclusive leadership structures benefit from enhanced innovation, improved decision-making, and stronger financial performance. Building on these insights, this study investigates the impact of entrepreneur gender on corporate performance, proposing the following hypotheses:

- **H5:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with organisational performance.
 - **H5a:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with revenue.
 - **H5b:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with net profit margin.
 - **H5c:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with net profit growth rate.
 - **H5d:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with net profit margin.
 - **H5e:** Entrepreneur gender is positively correlated with market share.

3.4 | The Relationship Among Entrepreneur Gender, Flexible Leadership, and Corporate Performance

Social role theory, introduced by Eagly and Karau (2002), provides a framework for understanding the intersection of gender and leadership. The theory posits that societal divisions of labor have historically shaped gendered behaviors and expectations, with men traditionally occupying external, task-oriented roles and women fulfilling domestic, nurturing roles (Eagly and Karau 2002). These entrenched role expectations influence societal perceptions of "appropriate" leadership styles for men

and women. Men are often expected to demonstrate strength, authority, and decisiveness, while women are anticipated to exhibit virtues such as empathy, gentleness, and care.

For female leaders, adopting leadership styles that conflict with these societal expectations—such as directive, autocratic, or overly assertive behaviors—may result in negative evaluations and resistance from subordinates (Eagly and Carli 2003). Conversely, leadership styles that align with societal norms for women, including participative, democratic, and relationship-oriented approaches, are more likely to elicit positive responses and foster harmonious organizational dynamics (Rosener 1990, Helgesen 1995).

Flexible leadership, characterized by adaptability, inclusiveness, and empowerment, aligns closely with the traits and behaviors traditionally associated with female leaders. By emphasizing collaboration and mutual respect, flexible leadership mitigates potential conflicts between societal role expectations and leadership role requirements. This alignment enables female leaders to navigate the complexities of organizational dynamics more effectively, reducing the risks of role incongruity and improving their overall leadership effectiveness (Eagly and Karau 2002).

Research supports the notion that female leaders who adopt flexible leadership styles are better positioned to enhance corporate performance. These leaders foster inclusive environments that leverage diverse perspectives, encourage employee engagement, and promote innovation.

These are key drivers of organizational success in dynamic markets (Eagly and Carli 2003). Flexible leadership allows female entrepreneurs to capitalize on their inherent strengths, thereby creating a leadership approach that is both socially acceptable and strategically effective, thus:

- **H6:** Entrepreneur gender acts as a moderating variable in the relationship between flexible leadership and organizational performance, exerting a positive moderating effect.

3.5 | The Relationship among Enterprise Size, Flexible Leadership, and Enterprise Performance

Flexible leadership, while widely regarded as effective, is not universally applicable across all organizational contexts. Leadership scholars have long struggled to identify a universally effective set of traits or behaviors. However, the complexities of organizational environments have led to the development of contingency leadership theories, which emphasize the need for leadership styles to align with specific situational variables (Fiedler 1964). These theories posit that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the interplay between a leader's characteristics, their behaviors, and the organizational context.

Enterprise size is one such critical situational factor. Organizations evolve through distinct developmental stages—establishment, expansion, formalization, and consolidation (Churchill and Lewis 1983). Each

stage is characterized by unique challenges, employee needs, and leader-member dynamics, necessitating corresponding adaptations in leadership style. This study explores whether the relationship between flexible leadership and enterprise performance is moderated by enterprise size and the literature suggest that leadership style should differ across enterprise development stages:

Startup Stage (Establishment Phase): During the early stages of an enterprise, organizations are typically small, and teams often consist of close-knit, like-minded individuals. Leadership in this stage prioritizes goal facilitation and support, achieved through daily informal interactions. The autocratic or benevolent-autocratic leadership styles are prevalent, as clear directives are essential to drive high growth and maintain operational focus. The small size of the organization allows leaders to maintain direct control without requiring formalized structures.

Expansion Stage: As organizations grow, goals often become less visible, and operational complexity increases. Leaders must now emphasize goal setting and structured communication. Regular meetings become necessary, not only for decision-making but also to foster team cohesion and alignment. Rapid growth during this stage increases the likelihood of errors, making corrective feedback and employee development crucial leadership activities. Flexible leadership begins to emerge as a valuable style, facilitating adaptability to changing demands while retaining the ability to manage interpersonal dynamics.

Formalization Stage: The third stage of organizational growth requires a change from directive to participative or consultative leadership styles. Leaders must delegate authority and empower employees to assume greater responsibility, as the size of the company exceeds the leadership capacity for direct oversight (Kerr and Jermier 1978). Many entrepreneurs struggle to transition their leadership style at this stage, putting their organizations at risk of stagnation. Flexible leadership becomes instrumental in addressing these challenges as it fosters employee engagement, creativity, and collaboration.

Consolidation Stage: In mature organizations, leadership focuses on cultural definition and strategic vision. Managers must adopt consultative approaches to engage employees, reinforce organizational values, and ensure alignment with long-term goals (Lissillour and Rodríguez-Escobar 2020). Leaders must also navigate the complexities of maintaining agility within established structures, which underscores the importance of flexibility in leadership behaviors.

Analysis of enterprise growth stages reveals an increasing reliance on participative, consultative, and caring leadership styles as organizations mature. Flexible leadership, with its emphasis on adaptability, inclusiveness, and employee empowerment, is particularly effective in larger enterprises where formalized structures and diverse teams necessitate collaborative approaches (Yukl 2012). However, in smaller enterprises, the proximity of leaders to employees may make some elements of flexible leadership less critical, as direct interactions and autocratic decisions are more feasible.

This study posits that the size of the organization moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and enterprise performance. Specifically, flexible leadership is expected to have a stronger positive

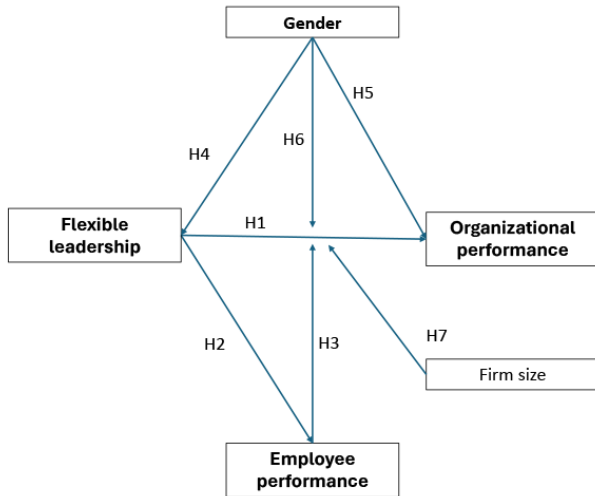


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.

impact on performance in larger organizations, where its principles align with the needs for decentralized decision-making, team collaboration, and employee empowerment, thus:

- **H7:** Enterprise size moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and organizational performance, exerting a positive moderating effect.

These 7 hypothesis result in the following conceptual model (fig. 1):

4 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Data Collection

This study used a structured questionnaire-based approach to collect data over a 3-month period. A total of 238 questionnaires were initially retrieved. After manual review to ensure data quality, 20 questionnaires were excluded due to issues such as incomplete responses, duplicate entries, and inconsistencies. Ultimately, 218 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, representing 91.6% of the total responses. The sample for this study was drawn from enterprises in multiple provinces in China, reflecting the diverse cultural and economic contexts within the rapidly evolving business landscape of the country.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are detailed in Table 1. The sample includes a balanced representation of genders, age groups, educational backgrounds, and levels of professional experience, ensuring diversity and generalizability of the findings. This demographic profile underscores the study's focus on exploring the interplay between flexible leadership and enterprise performance within a diverse and dynamic workforce.

4.2 | Constructs and Measurement

The constructs and their respective measurement items, derived from established literature, are summarized in Table 2. These items were assessed using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), ensuring a standardized approach to data collection.

4.3 | Sample Adequacy for Structural Equation Modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed for data analysis, necessitating an adequate sample size. According to Ding et al. (1995), a minimum sample size of 100 is recommended for maximum likelihood estimation. Furthermore, Gorsuch (1983) suggests that the sample size should be at least five times the number of measurement items. This study includes 38 measurement items, requiring a minimum sample size of 190. With 218 valid responses, the dataset satisfies these criteria, providing a robust foundation for SEM analysis.

5 | DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22.0 software, incorporating multiple analytical techniques to ensure robust insights into the hypothesized relationships. The analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). These multi-faceted approaches ensured the accuracy and validity of the findings while providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of flexible leadership and contextual factors on enterprise performance.

A CFA model was constructed using AMOS 22.0 to evaluate the relationship between flexible leadership and its associated dimensions. In the model, C1–C20 represent the measurement items, while $e1$ – $e20$ denote the error terms. The model's goodness-of-fit indices demonstrates a satisfactory fit to the data.

The reliability and convergent validity of the measurement items were assessed as follows:

1. **Standardized Factor Loadings (λ):** All loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating that the items reliably measure their respective constructs.
2. **Construct Reliability (CR):** All dimensions achieved CR values greater than 0.7, demonstrating internal consistency.
3. **Average Variance Extracted (AVE):** All AVE values were above the recommended threshold of 0.5, confirming good convergent validity.

The standardized factor loadings, CR, and AVE values for each dimension of flexible leadership are summarized in Table 3 and Table 4.

TABLE 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Project	Category	Score	Mean	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	0	0.468	116	53.21%
	Female	1		102	46.79%
Age	Less than 25		33.5	27	12.39%
	25-30			50	22.94%
	30-35			58	26.61%
	35-40			50	22.94%
	40-45			19	8.72%
	45-50			10	4.59%
Academic Qualifications	50-55		4	1.83%	
	High School	1	2.82	9	4.13%
	Junior College	2		62	28.44%
	Undergraduate	3		108	49.54%
	Master	4		36	16.51%
Doctor	5	3		1.38%	
Years of Joining the Profession	1-3 years	1	9.36	43	19.72%
	3-5 years	2		38	17.43%
	5-10 years	3		44	20.18%
	10-20 years	4		73	33.49%
	20+ years	5		20	9.17%
Years of Working Experience	1-3 years	1	10.35	27	12.39%
	3-5 years	2		34	15.60%
	5-10 years	3		56	25.69%
	10-20 years	4		72	33.03%
	20+ years	5		29	13.30%

6 | RESULTS

This study provides an in-depth exploration of the relationship between women entrepreneurs' flexible leadership styles and firm performance. The results of hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 5.

6.1 | Key Findings

The analysis revealed several significant findings. While female entrepreneurs exhibited higher levels of flexible leadership characteristics, such as inclusivity and personalized care, their overall adoption of flexible leadership did not differ significantly from their male counterparts. This finding suggests that flexible leadership is not inherently gendered but can be successfully employed by both male and female leaders. Importantly, the results demonstrated a positive correlation between the gender of the entrepreneur and firm performance, highlighting the unique value that women entrepreneurs contribute to organizational success.

The study confirmed that firm size moderates the effectiveness of flexible leadership. Smaller firms benefited significantly from participatory and empowering leadership styles, as these foster closer interpersonal relationships and employee engagement. Conversely, larger firms often required more structured leadership approaches to manage operational complexities. This finding underscores the importance of context-specific leadership strategies in different organizational stages.

The study also found that power distance plays a crucial moderating role. In high power-distance contexts, flexible leadership was less effective, as employees in hierarchical structures often expect directive

decision-making. Conversely, in low power-distance cultures, flexible leadership practices that emphasize inclusivity and shared decision-making yielded better outcomes, aligning with cultural preferences for egalitarianism.

7 | DISCUSSION

7.1 | Effectiveness of Flexible Leadership

This study underscores flexible leadership as a critical capability for navigating today's institutionally complex and dynamic corporate environment (Lissillour and Rodríguez-Escobar 2020, Sahut et al. 2023). Flexible leaders distinguish themselves by adapting their leadership approaches to the changing managerial context, ensuring alignment with organizational needs and employee expectations. These leaders exhibit the capacity to "flexibly couple" resources, processes, and people, enhancing organizational coherence in volatile settings (Lissillour 2021a).

Rooted in traditional leadership theories emphasizing "people-centric" management, flexible leadership prioritizes equality, trust, and open communication between leaders and subordinates (Yukl 2012). By fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment, flexible leadership effectively mobilizes employee creativity, enthusiasm, and commitment. This adaptability is particularly critical in knowledge-based organizations, where workers demand autonomy and intellectual stimulation (Bass et al. 1996).

The empirical findings of this study confirm that higher levels of flexible leadership are significantly associated with superior enterprise

TABLE 2 Constructs and Measurement Items

Construct	Items	Source
Inspirational Motivation	Emphasizes the collective mission. Expresses confidence in achieving goals. Highlights the significance of key tasks.	Bass & Avolio, 1994
Intellectual Stimulation	Challenges current methods and assumptions. Seeks diverse perspectives in problem-solving. Encourages employees to think creatively. Promotes looking at problems from multiple perspectives.	Bass & Avolio, 1994
Individualized Consideration	Genuinely cares about employees' work and personal development. Encourages personal growth and skill development. Provides tailored coaching. Attends to unique needs and aspirations.	Bass & Avolio, 1994
Empowerment	Offers employees more opportunities to participate in decision-making. Promotes self-leadership in task execution. Encourages autonomy in task arrangements. Inspires employees to take responsibility.	Carifio & Eyemaro, 2002
Inclusiveness	Encourages team members to voice their opinions. Values and integrates diverse viewpoints. Respects diverse perspectives and values. Assigns and coordinates tasks based on employees' strengths.	Carifio & Eyemaro, 2002
Employee Performance	Works effectively in teams. Takes initiative in improving processes. Delivers high-quality work consistently. Contributes to organizational goals beyond job requirements.	London & Mone, 2004
Organizational Performance	Demonstrates consistent revenue growth. Achieves high market share. Maintains a strong return on investment. Sustains employee satisfaction and low turnover rates.	López & Tanriverdi, 2005
Power Distance	Leaders should avoid unnecessary interaction with subordinates outside work. Employees should not challenge their superiors. Decisions should primarily rest with leaders. Employees generally comply with majority opinions.	Hofstede, 1980; Dorfman et al., 1997

TABLE 3 CFA Results: Factor Loadings (λ), Construct Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Dimension	Factor Loadings (λ)	CR	AVE
Inspirational Motivation	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5
Intellectual Stimulation	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5
Individualized Consideration	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5
Empowerment	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5
Inclusiveness	>0.7	>0.7	>0.5

performance, including increased revenue and net profit margins. Additionally, flexible leadership enhances employee outcomes, such as

higher job satisfaction, motivation, and innovation capacity. These results validate the theoretical framework and measurement model proposed in this study, highlighting the practical effectiveness of flexible leadership in fostering both employee and organizational success.

7.2 | The Value of Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership

Social role theory posits that societal divisions of labor shape expectations for gendered behaviors, often limiting women to nurturing and supportive roles (Eagly and Karau 2002, Eagly and Carli 2003). These biases contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership and the perception of men as natural leaders, perpetuating the "glass ceiling"

TABLE 4 Standardized Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Validity

Item	Standardized Factor Loading (λ)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Construct Reliability (CR)	AVE
C1 (Inspirational)	0.808	-	-	-	0.81	0.67
C2 (Inspirational)	0.844	0.072	13.2	***		
C3 (Inspirational)	0.803	0.076	12.4	***		
C4 (Intellectual)	0.872	-	-	-	0.84	0.76
C5 (Intellectual)	0.877	0.109	8.79	***		
C6 (Intellectual)	0.864	0.113	10.8	***		
C7 (Intellectual)	0.887	0.107	11.1	***		
C8 (Care)	0.822	0.096	11.9	***	0.82	0.70
C9 (Care)	0.890	0.089	13.0	***		
C10 (Care)	0.905	0.088	13.3	***		
C11 (Care)	0.833	0.093	10.5	***		
C12 (Care)	0.736	-	-	-		
C13 (Empowerment)	0.817	-	-	-	0.82	0.70
C14 (Empowerment)	0.842	0.070	14.0	***		
C15 (Empowerment)	0.890	0.074	10.9	***		
C16 (Empowerment)	0.805	0.065	11.0	***		
C17 (Inclusiveness)	0.741	0.085	11.3	***	0.83	0.73
C18 (Inclusiveness)	0.871	0.083	13.8	***		
C19 (Inclusiveness)	0.888	0.092	10.3	***		
C20 (Inclusiveness)	0.897	-	-	-		

Goodness-of-Fit Metrics: $\chi^2/df = 1.360$; RMR = 0.036; RMSEA = 0.051; GFI = 0.852; IFI = 0.924; CFI = 0.923.

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Empirical Test
H1: Flexible leadership is positively related to firm performance.	Supported
H1a: Leadership "inspiration" is positively related to business performance.	Supported
H1b: Leadership's "intellectual stimulation" is positively related to business performance.	Supported
H1c: Leadership's "personalized care" is positively related to firm performance.	Supported
H1d: Leaders' "empowerment" is positively related to firm performance.	Supported
H1e: Leaders' "inclusion" is positively related to business performance.	Supported
H2: Flexible leadership is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H2a: A leader's "inspiration" is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H2b: Leaders' "intellectual stimulation" is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H2c: A leader's "personalized care" is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H2d: Leaders' "empowerment" is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H2e: Leaders' "inclusion" is positively related to employee performance.	Supported
H3: Employee performance mediates the relationship between flexible leadership and firm performance.	Not Supported
H4: Female entrepreneurs have significantly higher levels of flexible leadership than male entrepreneurs.	Not Supported
H4a: Female entrepreneurs demonstrate higher levels of "inspiration" than male entrepreneurs.	Not Supported
H4b: Women entrepreneurs exhibit more "intellectual stimulation" than male entrepreneurs.	Not Supported
H4c: Women entrepreneurs demonstrate higher levels of "personalized care" than male entrepreneurs.	Not Supported
H4d: Women entrepreneurs demonstrate higher levels of "empowerment" than male entrepreneurs.	Not Supported
H4e: Women entrepreneurs are more tolerant than male entrepreneurs.	Supported
H5: Entrepreneur gender is positively related to firm performance.	Supported
H6: Entrepreneur gender moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and firm performance.	Supported
H7: Firm size moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and firm performance.	Supported

phenomenon (Acker 1990, Ryan and Haslam 2005). However, this study challenges these assumptions, demonstrating that women's leadership styles—characterized by inclusivity, empathy, and collaboration—can outperform traditional models.

Using quantitative data, this study finds a significant positive correlation between female entrepreneurship and enterprise performance ($p < 0.001$). Enterprises led by women exhibited higher turnover, net profit margins, and market share compared to those led by men. These

findings affirm the value of women's leadership in fostering superior organizational outcomes. They also highlight the need to address systemic biases that impede women's advancement, promoting the equitable development of female entrepreneurial talent (Eagly 2005).

7.3 | Leadership Style Selection of Female Entrepreneurs

Female leaders often face role incongruity when societal expectations conflict with leadership role demands, potentially diminishing their effectiveness (Eagly and Karau 2002). Flexible leadership, with its participatory and inclusive orientation, aligns closely with societal expectations for female leaders, helping them navigate these challenges. This alignment enhances organizational performance while empowering women to lead authentically (Helgesen 1995, Rosener 1990).

The study's findings reveal that female entrepreneurs who adopt flexible leadership styles achieve better enterprise performance. However, the analysis also shows that not all female entrepreneurs align with these styles. Some women adopt traditionally male leadership traits, such as task-oriented or authoritarian behaviors, which may hinder their effectiveness in culturally complex environments (Lissillour 2021b). Importantly, flexible leadership is not exclusive to women; male entrepreneurs who adopt this style also exhibit high performance, underscoring its universal applicability (Yukl 2012).

7.4 | Contextual Factors Affecting Flexible Leadership

Enterprise size significantly moderates the relationship between flexible leadership and performance. In smaller organizations, leaders often rely on directive styles due to their proximity to employees and the need for clear guidance (Churchill and Lewis 1983). However, as enterprises grow, the need for participatory and consultative leadership increases to manage complexity and foster collaboration (Yukl 2012). This study confirms that larger organizations derive greater benefits from flexible leadership, emphasizing its scalability and adaptability, especially in competitive contexts that force organizations to learn and adapt quickly (Purvis and Zhang 2024).

Power distance, a cultural dimension reflecting hierarchical preferences, also moderates flexible leadership effectiveness (Hofstede 1980). In high power-distance contexts, flexible leadership may face resistance due to employees' expectations for directive authority (Dorfman et al. 2012). Conversely, in low power-distance settings, where egalitarianism and participatory decision-making are valued, flexible leadership is more effective (House et al. 2004). Leaders must therefore tailor their approaches to align with the cultural norms of their organizations, notably within ESG frameworks (Vavřina and Drdla 2024).

This study provides empirical evidence on the situational applicability of flexible leadership, offering guidance for leaders to adapt their styles based on enterprise size and cultural dimensions. By integrating contingency theory with flexible leadership frameworks, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of leadership effectiveness in diverse organizational settings (Fiedler 1964).

8 | CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of flexible leadership in enhancing enterprise and employee performance, particularly within the context of female entrepreneurship. Empirical findings demonstrate that flexible leadership positively influences enterprise outcomes such as revenue growth, net profit margins, and market share. Additionally, it enhances employee performance by fostering job satisfaction, motivation, and creativity. Notably, the study confirms that female entrepreneurs who adopt flexible leadership achieve superior organizational outcomes, challenging traditional gender biases. Furthermore, enterprise size and power distance were identified as critical moderating factors: larger enterprises benefit more from flexible leadership, while high power-distance cultures diminish its effectiveness. These findings underscore the need for context-sensitive leadership strategies that align with organizational characteristics and cultural dimensions.

This research contributes to the literature on flexible leadership and its intersection with contingency theory, particularly in the context of gendered leadership and organizational dynamics. First, it introduces a comprehensive and validated measurement model for flexible leadership, filling a critical gap in quantitative research. While earlier studies on leadership styles, such as transformational and transactional leadership (Bass 1990, Avolio et al. 1999), laid the groundwork for understanding leadership effectiveness, this study expands these frameworks by operationalizing flexible leadership through dimensions such as inclusivity, empowerment, and individualized consideration (Goleman 2000, Yukl 2012). The development of a robust measurement scale allows for more precise assessments of flexible leadership's impact on both employee and organizational performance.

Second, this research contributes to gendered leadership studies by empirically demonstrating the moderating role of entrepreneur gender in the relationship between leadership style and enterprise performance. Previous studies (Eagly and Karau 2002, Helgesen 1995) have highlighted gender-specific leadership traits, but few have quantitatively examined how gender influences the effectiveness of leadership styles in organizational contexts. By showing that flexible leadership aligns well with the social role expectations of female entrepreneurs, this study builds on role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002) and provides empirical support for the advantages of adopting participatory and inclusive leadership styles in male-dominated sectors.

Third, this research extends contingency theory (Fiedler 1964) by incorporating enterprise size and power distance as critical situational variables influencing leadership effectiveness. Contingency theory has traditionally focused on factors such as task structure and leader-member relationships (Fiedler 1964), but this study enriches the framework by demonstrating that flexible leadership is more effective in larger enterprises and low power-distance contexts. These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of cultural and organizational characteristics in shaping leadership outcomes (Hofstede 1980, House et al. 2004). For instance, in high power-distance environments, directive leadership may be more culturally congruent, whereas in low

power-distance settings, participatory approaches are more effective (Ehrhart 2001, Dorfman and Howell 1997).

Finally, the study's nuanced exploration of leadership dynamics across diverse organizational and cultural contexts highlights its practical relevance. It contributes to the growing literature on adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al. 2009) by showcasing how flexible leadership can address complex challenges in rapidly changing environments. By synthesizing insights from transformational leadership, contingency theory, and gendered leadership research, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and applying flexible leadership in both traditional and emerging organizational contexts.

This research offers actionable insights for entrepreneurs and organizational leaders. For female entrepreneurs, the findings validate the effectiveness of flexible leadership in overcoming societal biases and achieving organizational success. By aligning leadership styles with societal expectations, women leaders can enhance their influence while driving enterprise performance. In addition to providing the right tacit knowledge to enhance entrepreneurship and leadership capabilities among employees (Rodriguez-Escobar et al. 2022 2024), organizational leaders, regardless of gender, are encouraged to adopt flexible leadership practices to foster inclusivity, employee engagement, and adaptability. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of tailoring leadership strategies to organizational size and cultural contexts, providing a practical roadmap for leaders operating in diverse and evolving environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that warrant further exploration. First, the analysis focuses on enterprise size and power distance as situational variables; however, other factors such as industry characteristics, regional cultural nuances, and ownership structures could significantly influence the effectiveness of flexible leadership. For instance, industries with high operational demands, such as manufacturing, may favor directive leadership styles, while creative sectors may thrive under participatory approaches. Second, the sample size and geographic focus, while sufficient for the current analysis, may limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should include multi-sample, cross-cultural studies to validate and extend these findings. Additionally, examining the interplay of flexible leadership with digital transformation and remote work environments could provide valuable insights into leadership effectiveness in modern organizational contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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None reported.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interests.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of the article at the publisher's website.

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EMPIRICAL ARTICLE

Navigating Institutional Logics: Balancing Cultural Preservation and Economic Sustainability in ethnic minority settlements

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Abstract

Purpose - This study investigates how traditional communities balance cultural preservation and economic sustainability amid modernization pressures. Using the Dulong Jiang carpet weaving industry in Yunnan Province, China, as a case study, it explores the mechanisms through which conflicting institutional logics coexist and adapt.

Design/Methodology/Approach - The study employs an ethnographic case study approach, integrating participant observation, semi-structured interviews with community members, and archival analysis. Data were analyzed through the lens of institutional logics, focusing on principles, assumptions, identities, and domains.

Findings - The research identifies three mechanisms—pulling down, relating, and aligning—that enable the community to navigate tensions between cultural preservation and economic sustainability. While cultural preservation logic emphasizes safeguarding traditional weaving as a core identity, economic sustainability logic drives the integration of modern tools and platforms like Taobao for market engagement. The findings highlight generational dynamics, sustainability challenges, and the innovative strategies employed to balance these logics.

Practical Implications - The study offers actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners. Strategies such as integrating traditional crafts into educational programs, promoting fair trade practices, and facilitating digital marketing training can support both cultural preservation and economic sustainability. Community-led resource management and environmental education are recommended to address ecological challenges.

Originality/Value - This study extends the institutional logics framework to cultural anthropology, showcasing how traditional crafts navigate modernization pressures. By analyzing the interplay of cultural and economic logics in a specific community, the study enriches theoretical discourse and provides a model for balancing heritage and progress in traditional industries.

KEYWORDS

Institutional Logics, Cultural Preservation, Economic Sustainability, Traditional Crafts, Modernization, Ethnography, Sustainability Challenges, Hybrid Strategies, Generational Dynamics.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Institutionalist theory in anthropology extends beyond the binaries of tradition versus modernity or pre-capitalist versus capitalist societies (Latour 1983). Contemporary scholars advocate for a pluralistic understanding of norms and institutions, recognizing the coexistence of multiple logics within complex social systems (Thornton et al. 2012).

Recent research has examined the coexistence and hybridization of multiple institutional logics in various contexts (Lissillour and Rodríguez-Escobar 2020, Wang 2024). For instance, a study on the integration of B Corp courses within business school curricula revealed how industry, social institution, and sustainability logics shape course framing and implementation (Lähteenkorva 2024). Additionally, research on sustainability practices in high-hazard organizations across different countries has highlighted how conflicting institutional logics influence localized understandings of sustainability (Milosevic et al. 2023).

However, there is a paucity of studies that specifically investigate how traditional cultural practices, such as indigenous crafts, navigate the tensions between cultural preservation and economic sustainability through the lens of institutional logics. This research addresses this gap by integrating insights from institutional logics (Thornton et al. 2012) and the embeddedness paradigm, thus positioning ethnic minority settlements within a framework that acknowledges the interplay between cultural values and market imperatives. It challenges the notion of static cultural practices, instead highlighting the dynamic negotiations that occur as communities strive to balance preservation with adaptation.

In the spirit of indigenous scholarship (Rodriguez-Escobar 2024), by examining the Dulong Jiang carpet weaving industry, this study contributes to the understanding of the hybridization of logics (how cultural preservation and economic sustainability logics interact, conflict, or blend in the context of traditional crafts) and community dynamics (the role of community identity and agency in negotiating these institutional logics).

This research enhances the theoretical framework of institutional logics by applying it to the field of cultural anthropology in the context of traditional craft industries. To frame the study, the following research questions are posed:

- What institutional logics are prevalent in the context of ethnic minority settlements?
- In what ways do community identity and agency mediate the tensions between these logics?
- What strategies do traditional communities employ to navigate the pressures of modernization while maintaining cultural integrity?

By addressing these questions, this research not only enriches theoretical discourse but also provides practical guidance for balancing heritage and progress in traditional industries.

This article is structured as follows: First, we provide a theoretical background exploring institutionalist theory and its application to cultural practices. Next, we detail the methodology employed in this study, followed by an in-depth case analysis of the Dulong Jiang carpet weaving industry. We then discuss the findings, highlighting the interplay of institutional logics and the mechanisms at work, before concluding with theoretical contributions, practical implications, and suggestions for future research.

2 | INSTITUTIONALIST THEORY IN ANTHROPOLOGY: BRIDGING EMBEDDEDNESS AND INFORMAL NORMS

Institutionalist theory, a cornerstone in understanding the dynamics between culture, economics, and society, has evolved significantly in anthropology to study the interplay of embeddedness and informal norms.

The concept of embeddedness, rooted in the work of Polanyi (1944), underscores the notion that economic activities are not autonomous but deeply enmeshed within social, cultural, and political systems. Polanyi's critique of market-driven economies highlighted the socio-cultural contexts that shape economic behaviors, a perspective further expanded by anthropologists like Bohannan and Dalton (1962). These scholars emphasized that economic systems in non-Western societies are regulated by non-economic mechanisms, challenging the universality of market-centric paradigms.

In anthropology, embeddedness has been explored through diverse lenses. Marxist economic anthropology, particularly in Africanist studies (e.g., Meillassoux (1964), framed economic activities as entrenched in relations of domination and production. Conversely, culturalist perspectives, such as Foster (1965)'s "image of the limited good," posited that shared cognitive frameworks in peasant societies shaped economic behaviors. While these perspectives differ, both highlight the economy's reliance on broader social and cultural systems.

The new institutional economics (NIE), as articulated by scholars like Ostrom (1990), introduced a nuanced understanding of informal institutions—socially transmitted norms, customs, and conventions that govern human interactions. Unlike formal rules enforced by legal systems, informal institutions are deeply embedded in cultural practices, reflecting shared values and collective identities.

Anthropologists have critiqued the reductive application of informal institutions in NIE, arguing that such norms are dynamic, contested, and heterogeneous (Olivier de Sardan 2013). The anthropology of public action, for instance, examines how informal norms mediate power asymmetries and collective action, offering a more contextually grounded approach (Olivier de Sardan 2013). This aligns with the broader institutionalist agenda of understanding the mechanisms through which norms and practices are negotiated within social arenas.

This theoretical synthesis underscores the potential for dialogue between anthropology and institutionalism, particularly in addressing questions of cultural preservation, sustainability, and economic transformation. As Olivier de Sardan (2013) notes, such dialogue requires empirical rigor and a commitment to examining the pluralism and contradictions inherent in social life. By adopting this perspective, the study contributes to a richer understanding of how institutional logics shape the lived realities of communities navigating the pressures of modernization.

2.1 | Institutional Logics: A Framework for Understanding Social and Organizational Practices

Institutional logics are fundamental to understanding how individuals and organizations navigate complex and often contradictory social environments (Lissillour 2021). This section provides a detailed explanation of institutional logics, drawing on recent literature and empirical insights to contextualize their application in anthropology studies.

Institutional logics are the socially constructed patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their social reality (Thornton et al. 2012). They serve as frameworks through which actors interpret and organize their behaviors within institutional contexts, linking micro-level actions to macro-level structures.

Thornton et al. (2012) identify institutional logics as templates that guide behavior and decision-making. These templates often encompass competing principles and priorities, requiring actors to navigate tensions between various societal domains such as the market, state, family, religion, and community. For instance, the logics of the market prioritize profitability and efficiency, while state logics emphasize regulation and collective welfare. These contrasting principles often co-exist, creating challenges and opportunities for individuals and organizations.

Building on Berente and Yoo (2012), institutional logics can be analyzed through four dimensions:

- **Principles:** The core values and organizing principles that underpin the logic and guide activities. For instance, managerial rationalism emphasizes efficiency and accountability, while scientific professionalism prioritizes innovation and technical rigor.
- **Assumptions:** The causal beliefs about how activities should be conducted to achieve desired outcomes. Market logic assumes profit maximization, while state logic assumes the importance of regulatory compliance and public welfare.
- **Identity:** How actors see themselves in relation to the institutional logic. For example, professionals align with expertise and ethics, while entrepreneurs may identify with innovation and risk-taking.
- **Domain:** The scope or field where the institutional logic operates, such as markets, organizations, or communities.

This multidimensional approach provides an analytical lens for analyzing how institutional logics shape individual and organizational behavior across varied contexts.

Institutional logics offer a valuable framework for anthropological inquiry, particularly in examining how cultural, economic, and political domains intersect. By focusing on the interplay of logics, anthropologists can explore:

- **Cultural Embeddedness:** How cultural norms and values shape institutional logics and their manifestations in different contexts.
- **Agency and Structure:** The ways individuals negotiate competing logics to assert agency within institutional constraints.
- **Sustainability and Resilience:** The role of institutional logics in fostering adaptive responses to environmental and social challenges.

2.2 | Mechanisms of Interaction Between Logics

Milosevic et al. (2023) identify three mechanisms through which institutional logics interact and shape practices:

- **Pulling Down:** Refers to selectively drawing elements from different institutional logics to create localized and contextually relevant practices. For example, in high-hazard organizations, employees may incorporate elements of state and organizational logics to balance regulatory compliance and operational safety.
- **Relating:** Refers to connecting practices to broader societal or organizational objectives, embedding elements of institutional logics into actions. This mechanism underscores the importance of aligning individual behaviors with collective goals, such as sustainability or community well-being.
- **Aligning:** Refers to reconciling conflicting logics by finding congruence between personal or professional identities and the values embedded in institutional logics. This process often manifests in sustainability practices, where professionals integrate ethical considerations into their technical roles.

Institutional logics provide a robust framework for analyzing the complex dynamics of social and organizational practices. By elucidating the mechanisms through which logics interact and shape individual behaviors, this framework bridges macro-structural theories and micro-level agency, offering nuanced insights into cultural and economic phenomena. As this study demonstrates, understanding institutional logics is essential for addressing global challenges such as sustainability, cultural preservation, and economic development.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This study employed a case study methodology to explore the interplay of institutional logics in the context of cultural preservation and economic sustainability in Dulong Jiang, a village in Yunnan Province, China. The case study approach was chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights into the complex social and organizational dynamics within a specific context (Yin 2018).

3.1 | Data Analysis

Data collection methods included participant observation (see Table 1), ethnographic fieldwork (see Table 2), semi-structured interviews (see Table 3), and the analysis of archival documents (see Table 4). Observations and fieldwork were conducted over a seven-day period in July 2024, during which researchers engaged with local community members, artisans, and cultural sites. These methods enabled the researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the local context and capture the lived experiences of participants (Emerson et al. 2011, Spradley 1980).

The analysis was guided by the four dimensions of institutional logics: principles, assumptions, identity, and domain (Thornton et al. 2012, Berente and Yoo 2012). This framework allowed the researchers to examine the logics of cultural preservation and economic sustainability that emerged from the data.

TABLE 1 Details of Participant Observation

Aspect	Details
Setting	Dulong Jiang, one county of Yunnan, focusing on weaving handicrafts in the village.
Duration	Daily observations over seven days in July 2024.
Role of Researcher	Researchers participated as a group of students, engaging in weaving activities and cultural exploration.
Activities Observed	Activities included weaving carpets, visiting the Dulong Jiang Museum, interviewing artisans, and observing community life.
Data Collected	Field notes, photographs, videos, and informal conversations.
Ethical Considerations	Steps were taken to respect privacy and cultural sensitivity, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring anonymity where necessary (?).

TABLE 2 Details of Ethnographic Fieldwork

Aspect	Details
Research Site(s)	Dulong Jiang village, museums, schools, and community spaces.
Fieldwork Duration	One week during July 2024.
Research Objectives	To explore traditional weaving practices, community dynamics, and the interplay of cultural preservation and economic development.
Methods Used	Participant observation, informal interviews, cultural event participation, and artifact collection.
Challenges Encountered	Language barriers were addressed through translation support.
Documentation Tools	Field notebooks, audio recorders, cameras, and mapping tools.

To triangulate our interpretation of the case (Yin 2018), data from participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and archival documents were coded and analyzed thematically, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke 2006).

4 | CASE STUDY: DULONG JIANG—INTERPLAY OF INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS IN CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 | Introduction to the Case

Dulong Jiang, located in the remote northwestern part of Yunnan Province, China, represents a unique intersection of cultural heritage and ecological significance. Nestled in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the region is known for its pristine environment, high-altitude biodiversity,

TABLE 3 Details of Interviews

Aspect	Details
Number of Participants	42 community members, 21 artisans, and 2 local police officials.
Sampling Method	Purposeful sampling of individuals knowledgeable about traditional practices and community dynamics (Patton 2015).
Interview Type	Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and informal conversations.
Interview Focus Areas	Topics included weaving traditions, economic challenges, generational perspectives, and cultural preservation.
Language and Translation	Conducted in the local Dulong language with Mandarin translation.
Data Collection Tools	Audio recorders, field notes, and transcription software.

TABLE 4 Details of Documents and Archives

Aspect	Details
Source Type	Government reports, museum records, and historical texts.
Purpose	To understand historical weaving practices and trace the evolution of cultural traditions.
Scope	Documents such as the "Dulong Jiang Development Reports, 2022-2024."
Access Method	Accessed through public archives, museum visits, and personal contacts.
Limitations	Challenges in verifying the authenticity and comprehensiveness of some documents.

TABLE 5 Themes and Definitions

Theme	Definition
Principles	The core values or organizing principles that guide actions within a logic.
Assumptions	The underlying beliefs about causal relationships or norms that underpin practices.
Identity	The roles or identities that individuals adopt within the framework of the logic.
Domain	The specific areas of activity or practice where the logic is most applicable.

and rich traditions upheld by the Dulong ethnic community. Historically isolated due to its challenging terrain, the area has recently undergone significant transformations, particularly with improved road infrastructure facilitating access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

At the heart of Dulong Jiang's cultural identity lies the traditional craft of carpet weaving. This practice, deeply rooted in the community's heritage, serves both as a symbol of cultural preservation and as a vehicle for economic development. However, the rapid modernization and increasing pressures from eco-tourism have created a complex interplay of institutional logics that shape the community's practices and priorities. The introduction of road infrastructure has enabled the sale of handwoven carpets beyond local markets, including online platforms like Taobao. This economic integration has supported livelihoods but has also introduced market-driven challenges, such as the pressure to produce at scale and adapt to modern designs.

Moreover, the community continues to balance its reliance on local natural resources for raw materials with the need for environmental conservation. Efforts to teach Mandarin to younger generations and facilitate their integration into broader socio-economic systems highlight the tensions between modernization and cultural preservation.

4.2 | Institutional Logics in Dulong Jiang

The interplay of institutional logics of cultural preservation and economic sustainability in Dulong Jiang is analyzed through the four dimensions of institutional logics: principles, assumptions, identity, and domain.

4.2.1 | Cultural Preservation Logic

The cultural preservation logic in Dulong Jiang is deeply rooted in the community's commitment to safeguarding its heritage. This logic governs traditional practices, particularly carpet weaving, as a means of maintaining cultural identity and social cohesion. Artisans in the community, especially women, see themselves as custodians of this tradition, passing down knowledge and techniques through generations. Local cultural sites, such as the Dulong Jiang Museum, play a pivotal role in teaching and celebrating these practices (see Table 6).

4.2.2 | Economic Sustainability Logic

In contrast, the economic sustainability logic emphasizes the integration of traditional crafts into broader market systems to improve livelihoods. This logic prioritizes profitability, efficiency, and adaptation to consumer demands. The younger generation, along with entrepreneurial artisans, view their craft as a tool for economic advancement. Platforms like Taobao have become critical for extending the reach of Dulong carpets, facilitating sales to national and international markets (see Table 7).

4.3 | Mechanisms of Interaction Between Logics

Pulling Down

Pulling Down refers to selectively drawing elements from different institutional logics to create localized and contextually relevant practices. In Dulong Jiang, the community maintains traditional weaving techniques (cultural preservation logic) while integrating modern tools and methods to increase efficiency (economic sustainability logic). For instance, the use of natural dyes alongside more durable synthetic threads represents a selective adoption of modern practices. While traditional weaving designs are preserved for cultural authenticity, specific patterns and products are tailored to tourist preferences and external markets, reflecting a localized synthesis of heritage and market demands. The use of platforms like Taobao blends traditional crafts with digital commerce. The community selectively integrates modern e-commerce systems without abandoning their cultural identity.

Relating

Relating refers to connecting practices to broader societal or organizational objectives, embedding elements of institutional logics into actions. In Dulong Jiang, artisans relate their traditional practices to economic goals by aligning them with local and national initiatives for rural revitalization. For instance, their participation in government-supported programs to promote cultural heritage directly connects their weaving practices to economic objectives. The teaching of Mandarin and modern skills to younger generations aligns with the state's vision of modernization and integration while ensuring that cultural practices like weaving are passed down as part of this education. The community embeds cultural preservation efforts into broader environmental conservation initiatives. For example, sustainable harvesting of raw materials for weaving aligns their practices with ecological priorities promoted by NGOs and government agencies.

TABLE 6 Cultural Preservation Logic

Dimension	Description
Principles	Safeguarding heritage: The intricate patterns and natural dyes used in carpet weaving symbolize the community's connection to their ancestors and environment.
Assumptions	Traditional weaving practices and rituals are essential for maintaining cultural identity and social cohesion. For example, the use of handwoven hemp threads dyed with natural pigments reflects this belief.
Identity	Artisans identify themselves as custodians of tradition, with weaving serving as a deeply personal and communal practice. Women, in particular, see their role as central to preserving this cultural art form.
Domain	The local community and cultural sites, such as the Dulong Jiang Museum, where traditions are taught, showcased, and celebrated.

TABLE 7 Economic Sustainability Logic

Dimension	Description
Principles	Emphasizes market-oriented practices, including efficient production, profitability, and adaptation to consumer demands. The sale of carpets through platforms like Taobao exemplifies this shift.
Assumptions	Assumes that integrating local crafts into larger economic networks will lead to improved livelihoods. This drives initiatives to modernize designs and increase production to meet market demands.
Identity	Younger generations and entrepreneurial artisans identify as innovators and economic contributors. Their focus is on leveraging traditional skills to create marketable products that cater to broader audiences.
Domain	Extends beyond the local community to include regional and online markets, highlighting the integration of traditional crafts into global economic systems.

Aligning

Aligning refers to reconciling conflicting logics by finding congruence between personal or collective identities and the values embedded in institutional logics. In Dulong Jiang, women artisans see themselves as cultural custodians, aligning their identity with the cultural preservation logic. Younger artisans, however, often view themselves as innovators, aligning their identity with economic sustainability logic. This generational reconciliation happens through shared goals of community well-being. The community embraces modernization (e.g., road development, market access) as a means of enhancing quality of life while framing these advancements as tools to celebrate and share their cultural heritage. This alignment reduces the tension between preserving traditions and embracing change. Products that combine traditional weaving techniques with contemporary designs serve as tangible examples of aligning cultural and economic values. These products allow the community to maintain cultural pride while catering to market trends.

4.4 | Integration of Mechanisms

In Dulong Jiang, "pulling down," "relating," and "aligning" work together to create a fluid and adaptive approach to modernization (see Table 8). For example, the decision to use platforms like Taobao involves pulling down modern e-commerce tools, relating these tools to the community's economic goals, and aligning the resulting market activities with

the artisans' sense of identity and tradition. The intergenerational collaboration in weaving reflects aligning values between preservation-focused elders and innovation-driven youth, while relating their efforts to broader economic and cultural frameworks.

4.5 | Challenges and Opportunities

By leveraging these mechanisms, the Dulong Jiang community demonstrates resilience and adaptability, navigating the tensions between cultural preservation and economic sustainability in a dynamic, context-specific manner. The interplay of cultural preservation and economic sustainability logics in Dulong Jiang creates a dynamic yet challenging environment for the community. While modern platforms provide opportunities to promote traditional crafts and improve livelihoods, they also introduce tensions, such as reconciling market demands with the slow, intricate process of traditional weaving.

The modernization of infrastructure has undeniably brought economic benefits, yet it risks diluting cultural practices as younger generations gravitate toward modern lifestyles and commercial activities. Environmental pressures further complicate this balance, underscoring the need for sustainable practices in sourcing raw materials and crafting carpets. Ultimately, the Dulong Jiang case highlights the complexities of navigating modernization in traditional communities. By understanding the principles, assumptions, identities, and domains of cultural preservation and economic sustainability, stakeholders can work toward solutions that honor heritage while embracing progress.

TABLE 8 Mechanisms of Institutional Logics in Dulong Jiang and Their Empirical Aspects

Mechanism	Definition	Empirical Aspect 1	Empirical Aspect 2	Empirical Aspect 3
Pulling Down	Selectively drawing elements from different logics to create localized, contextually relevant practices.	Integration of traditional weaving techniques with modern tools and synthetic threads to improve durability.	Tailoring traditional designs to meet tourist preferences while maintaining cultural motifs.	Adoption of e-commerce platforms like Taobao to expand market access while preserving a focus on local identity.
Relating	Connecting practices to broader societal or organizational objectives.	Alignment of traditional weaving with government initiatives for rural revitalization and cultural promotion.	Teaching Mandarin to younger generations to support modernization while incorporating cultural education.	Sustainable harvesting of raw materials to align with environmental conservation efforts and economic development.
Aligning	Reconciling conflicting logics by finding congruence between identities and embedded values.	Women artisans embrace their role as cultural custodians, balancing heritage preservation with market adaptation.	Younger artisans align economic innovation with community pride, creating hybrid products that honor tradition.	Creation of hybrid designs combining traditional techniques with modern aesthetics to meet market trends and cultural values.

5 | DISCUSSION

5.1 | Balancing Dual Institutional Logics

The resilience of Dulong Jiang's weaving traditions, despite modernization pressures, underscores the community's agency in preserving its identity. This resonates with Zhang (2000), who emphasizes the role of community-driven efforts in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The continued use of natural dyes and handwoven techniques, even in the face of industrial competition, demonstrates a commitment to cultural values.

As Mazard (2014) argues, the commodification of cultural practices for external markets often risks diluting their authenticity. In Dulong Jiang, the adaptation of weaving designs to cater to consumer preferences creates a tension between preserving cultural significance and meeting market demands. The transformation of traditional carpets into commodities tailored for modern aesthetics reflects broader concerns about the erosion of cultural identity in the face of globalization (Gros 2004, Mazard 2014). This commodification of cultural practices seems to play the same role as the commodification of work, which is driven by new forms of algorithmic management (Lissillour and Monod 2024).

Economic sustainability in Dulong Jiang has been significantly bolstered by improved access to markets, both physical and digital. Li (2003) highlights how infrastructure development facilitates economic integration, enabling artisans to reach broader audiences. In Dulong Jiang, younger artisans have embraced this opportunity, leveraging platforms like Taobao to modernize their craft while creating economic value. However, this empowerment is uneven. As observed by Zhang et al. (1997), older generations often lack the skills or resources to navigate these new economic landscapes, creating generational disparities in economic participation.

The reliance on local natural resources for traditional weaving materials introduces significant environmental challenges. Overharvesting of raw materials like hemp and natural dyes poses risks to both ecological

balance and the long-term viability of the craft. Zhang et al. (1997) and Gros (2004) emphasize the importance of integrating sustainable practices into cultural preservation efforts. In Dulong Jiang, strategies such as community-led resource management and environmental education are critical for ensuring the coexistence of economic and environmental sustainability.

The coexistence of institutional logics in Dulong Jiang highlights the inherent tensions communities face when navigating conflicting demands. As Berente and Yoo (2012) observe, the intersection of multiple logics creates both challenges and opportunities for adaptation. In Dulong Jiang, the cultural preservation logic emphasizes safeguarding heritage through traditional weaving practices, while the economic sustainability logic focuses on leveraging market-oriented strategies for community empowerment. This interplay reflects Thornton et al. (2012)'s framework, which underscores how institutional logics shape organizational and community actions. Akin to prior studies on hybrid organizations (Wang 2024), the case demonstrates that rather than a binary conflict, these logics often coexist in dynamic tension, with communities enacting hybrid strategies to accommodate both.

A key mechanism for balancing these logics is the reconfiguration of traditional practices to align with modern market demands. Platforms like Taobao exemplify how traditional crafts can be reframed as marketable products, blending authenticity with commercial appeal. This aligns with Zhao et al. (2020), who emphasize the role of digital platforms in bridging local traditions with global markets. Similarly, Gros (2004) highlights how cultural groups adapt their practices to sustain livelihoods without entirely sacrificing their heritage. The Dulong Jiang case illustrates this adaptability, where traditional weaving is both a cultural symbol and an economic asset. This pulling-down mechanism relates to the loose coupling mechanism that helps social groups cope with contradictory institutional logics (Lissillour 2021).

5.2 | Interplay of Logics and Community Identity

Identity serves as a crucial mediator in navigating the tensions between cultural preservation and economic sustainability. Women artisans in Dulong Jiang, for instance, identify as custodians of tradition, seeing weaving as a deeply personal and communal practice. This aligns with Thornton et al. (2012)'s assertion that identity shapes how actors prioritize and enact institutional logics. On the other hand, younger artisans view themselves as innovators and economic contributors, focusing on modernizing traditional crafts to appeal to wider markets (Mazard 2014).

The generational divide in Dulong Jiang mirrors broader patterns observed in other traditional communities. Gros (2004) notes that younger generations often adapt traditional practices for economic gain, while elders prioritize cultural purity. In Dulong Jiang, this divide is evident in the differing approaches to weaving: older artisans emphasize traditional methods, while younger ones embrace technological innovations and market-oriented strategies. This tension reflects the broader interplay of continuity and change within cultural systems.

The interaction of institutional logics in Dulong Jiang aligns with and extends the insights from prior studies on hybrid organizational and social practices. Milosevic et al. (2023) identify three mechanisms—pulling down, relating, and aligning—through which institutional logics interact, offering a framework to understand how tensions between competing logics are negotiated in high-hazard organizations. While their analysis primarily addresses organizational sustainability practices, these mechanisms also resonate with studies of cultural and economic hybridity in traditional communities.

5.2.1 | Pulling Down

The process of pulling down involves the selective incorporation of elements from conflicting logics to create practices that are locally relevant and contextually meaningful. Previous studies, such as Gros (2004) and Zhao et al. (2020), have documented similar selective adaptations in cultural practices, where communities incorporate modern tools while maintaining traditional identities. This is consistent with the dynamics observed in Dulong Jiang, where younger generations draw from economic logics to leverage platforms like Taobao but adapt these tools to uphold cultural authenticity. This selective adaptation mirrors what Lissillour and Rodríguez-Escobar (2020) describe as flexible coupling, where actors balance conflicting institutional demands by maintaining loose but strategic connections between logics. In this sense, the practices in Dulong Jiang do not merely represent a compromise but actively reconfigure institutional elements to suit both market and cultural needs.

5.2.2 | Relating

Relating emphasizes how actors link their practices to broader societal or organizational objectives, embedding local practices within overarching logics. As noted by Zhang (2000) and Zhao et al. (2020), cultural communities often align their activities with state-led initiatives or market-driven goals to sustain both cultural and economic viability. The connection between weaving traditions and state programs for rural revitalization in Dulong Jiang exemplifies this mechanism.

This alignment resonates with Polanyi's (1944) concept of embeddedness, wherein economic practices are enmeshed within broader cultural and social structures. Furthermore, relating reflects the nested dependencies of institutional logics described by Thornton et al. (2012), where local practices are framed in ways that satisfy broader institutional imperatives. In this case, the Dulong Jiang community situates their weaving traditions within national sustainability narratives, thereby aligning their practices with state-driven modernization goals without undermining cultural values.

5.2.3 | Aligning

Aligning addresses the reconciliation of logics through identity and values, a process heavily mediated by generational and gendered dynamics in Dulong Jiang. As Thornton et al. (2012) suggest, identity serves as a crucial bridge between competing logics, enabling actors to prioritize one logic without entirely abandoning the other. This mechanism echoes the dual legitimacy strategies observed in other hybrid contexts (Berente and Yoo 2012), where actors maintain alignment with multiple logics to ensure both external validation and internal coherence.

The generational tensions in Dulong Jiang, where older artisans emphasize cultural preservation and younger artisans embrace economic innovation, are indicative of broader patterns highlighted in the literature (Gros 2004, Mazard 2014). The alignment process allows these generational divides to be negotiated, fostering hybrid practices that reflect both cultural continuity and economic transformation. This dynamic parallels what Wang (2024) terms selective coupling, wherein actors integrate disparate logics while preserving the integrity of their core identity.

By integrating Milosevic et al. (2023)'s framework with insights from cultural anthropology and institutional theory, this study extends the applicability of these mechanisms to traditional, community-based contexts. The findings emphasize that these mechanisms are not isolated but interdependent, operating simultaneously to mediate the interplay of logics. This contributes to the broader discourse on hybridization in institutional logics, highlighting the role of agency and identity in navigating complex institutional environments (Thornton et al. 2012, Lissillour and Monod 2024).

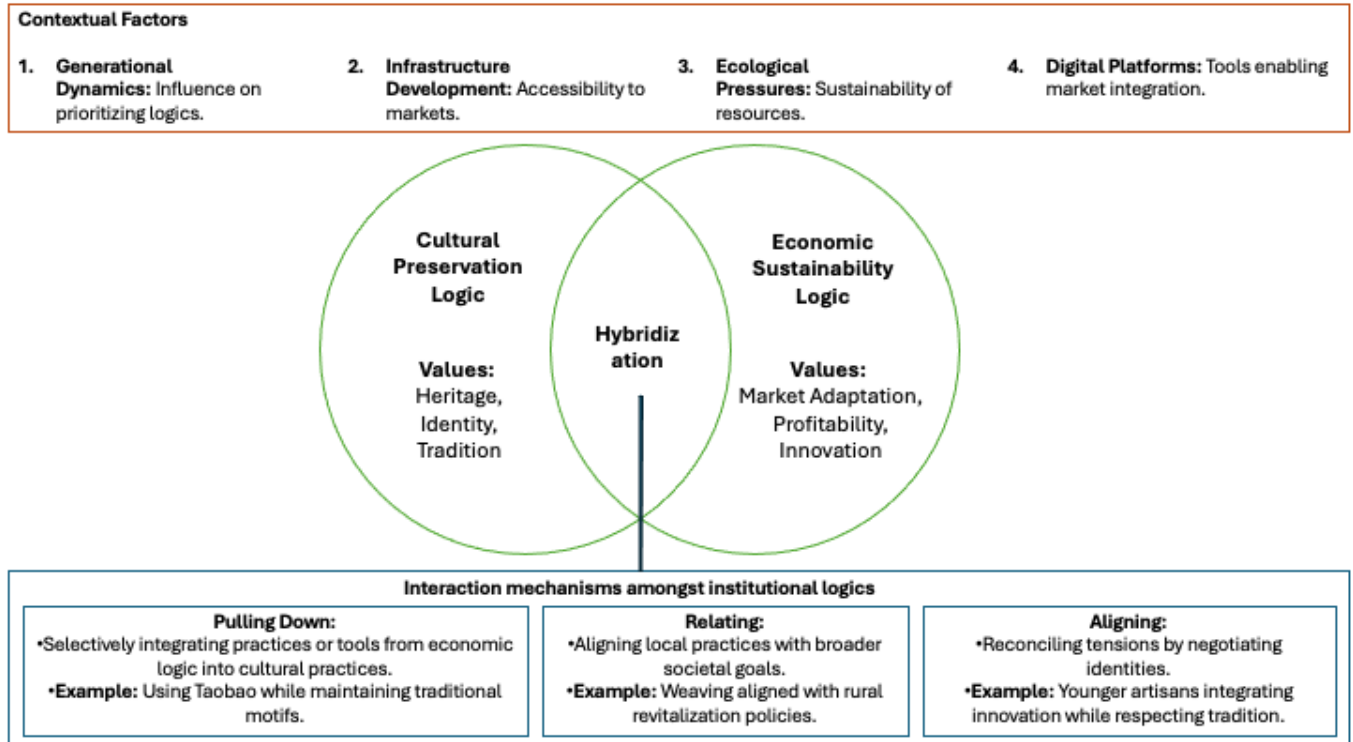


FIGURE 1 Conceptual Framework: Mechanisms of Institutional Logic Interaction in Balancing Cultural Preservation and Economic Sustainability

6 | CONCLUSION

This study explored the interplay of institutional logics in the Dulong Jiang carpet weaving industry, shedding light on the tensions and synergies between cultural preservation and economic sustainability. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of how traditional communities navigate modernization while striving to maintain their heritage. The analysis revealed that Dulong Jiang exemplifies the coexistence of two dominant institutional logics: cultural preservation and economic sustainability. The cultural preservation logic emphasizes safeguarding heritage through traditional weaving practices, rooted in the community’s identity and rituals. Conversely, the economic sustainability logic prioritizes integration into broader market systems, leveraging platforms like Taobao to create economic opportunities.

Key insights include the description of Hybrid Strategies, Generational Tensions, and Sustainability Challenges. The community has enacted innovative strategies to blend traditional practices with modern economic mechanisms, such as marketing culturally significant crafts to global audiences. Mechanisms such as pulling down, relating, and aligning illustrate how traditional practices are adapted to modern contexts. For instance, artisans use digital platforms like Taobao to promote their crafts while maintaining traditional methods and motifs. A generational divide highlights differing priorities, with older artisans focusing on preserving cultural purity and younger artisans adapting practices to align

with market demands. The reliance on natural resources introduces ecological risks, underscoring the need for sustainable practices to ensure the long-term viability of both cultural and economic activities.

6.1 | Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the institutional logics literature by extending its application to the realm of cultural anthropology and traditional crafts. By integrating insights from Thornton et al. (2012) and Wang (2024), it demonstrates how the interplay of logics shapes community identity, decision-making, and adaptive strategies in non-corporate contexts. Specifically, the study highlights the dynamic nature of institutional logics, showcasing how communities actively negotiate and blend conflicting logics. The case study underscores the centrality of identity in mediating tensions, with generational and gendered identities playing pivotal roles in navigating institutional complexity. The findings expand the application of the embeddedness paradigm, illustrating how traditional economic practices are deeply intertwined with cultural and social norms.

6.2 | Practical Implications

The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and cultural heritage. Governments and NGOs should develop policies that balance cultural preservation with economic development,

such as promoting fair trade and intellectual property protections for traditional crafts. Community-led resource management and environmental education can mitigate the ecological risks associated with the overharvesting of raw materials. Integrating traditional crafts into school curricula and cultural festivals can foster younger generations' interest in preserving heritage while encouraging innovation. Training programs on digital marketing and e-commerce can empower artisans to leverage modern platforms without compromising cultural authenticity.

6.3 | Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides rich insights, several limitations warrant attention. The findings are context-specific and may not fully generalize to other regions or crafts. Comparative studies in other traditional industries could broaden understanding. A longitudinal study would offer deeper insights into how the interplay of institutional logics evolves over time, particularly as modernization efforts intensify. Moreover, future research could employ a practice-based methodology (Lissillour et al. 2023) to better understand the impact of capital and habitus in shaping sustainability practices (Lissillour 2022, Lissillour and Silva 2024). Further research could quantitatively assess the ecological effects of resource use in traditional crafts and explore sustainable alternatives. Future studies could investigate how consumer perceptions of authenticity influence the economic viability of traditional crafts in global markets (Cheben et al. 2022, Lissillour et al. 2022).

The Dulong Jiang case underscores the resilience and adaptability of traditional communities in navigating modernization. By balancing cultural preservation with economic sustainability, the community provides a compelling model of hybrid institutional logics in action. This study not only enriches theoretical discourse but also offers actionable strategies for supporting traditional crafts in an increasingly globalized world.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed to conceptualization, writing, reviewing, editing and addressing reviewer comments.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of the article at the publisher's website.

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EMPIRICAL ARTICLE

The Impact of Green Human Resource Management Practices on Environmental Performance in a Developing Country: The Moderating Role of Green Information Management Systems

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Abstract

Objective - This study investigates the impact of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices on Environmental Performance (EP) in a developing country. In addition, it examines the moderating role of Green Information Management Systems (GIMS) in strengthening the relationship between GHRM and EP.

Approach - A cross-sectional survey design was used, collecting data from managers of medium to large-scale manufacturing firms in Cambodia. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze data from 217 valid responses to test the proposed hypotheses.

Results - The results indicate that GHRM practices have a significant positive impact on EP. Furthermore, GIMS was found to directly enhance EP and moderate the GHRM-EP relationship. This shows the synergistic effects of integrating human resource practices with information systems to achieve sustainability goals.

Practical Implications - The study provides actionable insights for managers in developing countries on the adoption of GHRM practices and the use of GIMS to improve environmental performance. It highlights the importance of aligning green practices with technological capabilities and tailoring initiatives to local cultural and economic contexts.

Originality - This research contributes to the limited literature on GHRM and GIMS in developing countries, and introduces GIMS as a critical moderator in the GHRM-EP relationship, advancing theoretical frameworks such as the resource-based view and contingency theory. The study also addresses context-specific challenges and opportunities in implementing green practices in resource-constrained settings.

KEYWORDS

Green Human Resource Management; Green Information Management Systems; Environmental Performance; Developing Countries; Sustainability.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the global debacle of environmental degradation brought on by the Industrial Revolution, environmental challenges and sustainable development have become critical global concerns (Bonet and Lissillour 2023), including in developing countries. Firms face growing pressure to adopt green practices encompassing eco-friendly management approaches and sustainable products to meet international standards of

sustainability (Gupta 2018, Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour 2016). Development institutions and agencies use these standards to identify and mitigate negative environmental and social impacts of projects. For example, the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) include provisions for biodiversity conservation, labor conditions, and resource efficiency, serving as benchmarks to advance sustainability practices worldwide.

Environmental sustainability has increasingly permeated organizational decision-making processes, influencing functions such as finance, marketing, and supply chain management (Soo Wee and Quazi 2005).

In this context, the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in developing countries is evolving as organizations recognize its potential to shape culture, policies, and strategies toward sustainability. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is emerging as a critical approach for integrating environmental goals into HR practices. By engaging employees and cultivating their commitment to environmental sustainability, GHRM has a direct impact on enhancing organizational environmental performance (EP) (Renwick et al. 2013).

Despite its importance, the manufacturing sector—a key driver of economic development in many developing countries (Marconi et al. 2016, Szirmai and Verspagen 2015)—faces significant challenges in adopting green practices due to poor managerial systems and limited resources. Consequently, adopting GHRM practices becomes imperative to reduce environmental harm while maintaining economic progress.

Furthermore, prior studies underscore the need to incorporate indigenous perspectives into global management practices (Rodriguez-Escobar 2024). This is particularly relevant for developing countries, where manufacturing processes must align with both local contexts and global sustainability objectives. However, there is limited research on GHRM implementation in the manufacturing sectors of developing economies. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the effect of GHRM practices on EP in Cambodian manufacturing firms. It identifies key GHRM practices and explores their impact on EP, offering actionable insights for HR managers in Cambodia to develop sustainable green initiatives.

This study contributes to the limited literature on GHRM in developing countries by exploring the interrelationships among GHRM, Green Information Management Systems (GIMS), and EP. By highlighting strategies that align HR practices with environmental objectives, this research fosters a green corporate culture and advances the understanding of sustainability initiatives in developing economies. The findings aim to provide theoretical insights and practical recommendations for organizations striving for sustainable development.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and develops the research hypotheses. Section 3 outlines the methodology used in this study, while Section 4 presents the results of the analysis. Section 5 discusses the findings in the context of prior research. Finally, Section 6 concludes with theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and directions for future research.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Environmental Performance (EP)

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) plays a pivotal role in fostering employees' environmentally responsible behaviors by aligning

human resource practices with organizational environmental management objectives. This alignment facilitates the establishment of a green workplace culture, as highlighted by Cherian and Jacob (2012). The foundational relationship between HRM and environmental management was first noted in Wehrmeyer's seminal work *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management* (Wehrmeyer 1996). Subsequent studies (Nalini and Bonnie 2004, Sudin 2011) have reinforced HRM's critical role in achieving environmental objectives.

Globally, the adoption of environmental management systems, such as ISO 14001, underscores HRM's significance in improving environmental dimensions of performance. Although still at an embryonic stage, these systems are increasingly adopted due to the growing need to meet international trade and investment requirements (Chan 2011, Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour 2016). HRM serves as a critical driver to initiate and sustain green practices by raising employees' awareness and commitment to environmental objectives (Bhutto 2016, Mandip 2012).

GHRM contributes to the "triple bottom line" of social, economic, and environmental sustainability by integrating green objectives into HR practices. Evidence from developed economies demonstrates that organizations adopting GHRM practices enjoy enhanced financial performance alongside environmental benefits (O'Donohue and Torugsa 2016, Aftab et al. 2023, Mo et al. 2025). Such practices, including electronic filing, recycling programs, and energy-efficient workplace solutions, not only reduce environmental waste but also enhance organizational efficiency and employee engagement.

However, implementing GHRM in developing countries is fraught with challenges due to gaps in environmental policies and workplace behaviors. Nisar et al. (2021) studied GHRM in Malaysia, an upper-middle-income country, and emphasized the need for future research in manufacturing industries to address contextual differences (Haldorai et al. 2022, Amjad et al. 2021). Cultural and workforce diversity significantly influence the adaptation of green practices (Haddock-Millar et al. 2016), underscoring the importance of designing context-specific GHRM policies tailored to local cultural and economic environments. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. *H1: The implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices positively influences Environmental Performance (EP).*

2.2 | Green Information Management System (GIMS) and Environmental Performance (EP)

The growing global concern for environmental sustainability has motivated organizations to adopt green practices, with green information management systems (GIMS) emerging as a critical enabler of enhanced environmental performance (EP). GIMS facilitates the development of energy-saving technologies and processes, reduces ecological footprints, and enhances environmental reputation (Lo et al. 2012). In addition, GIMS promotes transparency in environmental performance,

which can enhance stakeholder trust and provide competitive advantages (Seidel et al. 2013).

Described as information systems that support environmental management through efficient data collection, analysis, and reporting, GIMS assists sustainable decision making (Chen et al. 2018 2022, Lutfi et al. 2024). These systems streamline processes such as energy management, waste reduction, and emissions control, thereby positively impacting environmental performance (Zhu et al. 2023). GIMS also facilitates resource efficiency and reduces waste generation, as evidenced by Khan et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2021). Furthermore, information sharing through GIMS enhances collaboration across supply chain partners, enabling holistic environmental footprint reductions (Li et al. 2022, Lissillour and Ruel 2023).

While studies on GIMS primarily focus on developed countries, there is a significant gap in understanding its adoption and impact in developing nations. Huang et al. (2024) emphasized the geographical and cultural limitations of existing research, calling for investigations into the effectiveness of GIMS in diverse contexts. To address this gap, the current study focuses on a developing country to explore the role of GIMS in enhancing environmental performance. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2. *H2: The implementation of Green Information Management Systems (GIMS) positively influences Environmental Performance (EP).*

2.3 | Moderating Role of Green Information Management Systems (GIMS)

Green HRM practices, such as green recruitment, training, and performance appraisal, are well-documented as enablers of improved environmental performance (Renwick et al. 2013). These practices align employees with organizational environmental objectives, minimizing resource use and waste generation but GHRM's effectiveness is often contingent on complementary systems that facilitate information flow and decision-making (Lissillour and Sahut 2023). Despite eventual resistance in the adoption of such information systems (Lissillour and Monod 2024, Lissillour and Rodríguez-Escobar 2020), GIMS are likely to play a crucial role in enabling GHRM by providing real-time access to environmental performance metrics and instilling transparency and accountability.

Studies have shown that GIMS enhances interdepartmental collaboration by providing a common platform for environmental data reporting and analysis, thereby strengthening the impact of GHRM practices (Wang et al. 2021, Li et al. 2022). However, limited research exists on the moderating role of GIMS in developing countries, where unique challenges impact GHRM and GIMS adoption.

Building on existing literature, this study posits that GIMS amplifies the effectiveness of GHRM practices by facilitating data-driven decision-making and fostering organizational collaboration. The following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3. *H3: Green Information Management Systems (GIMS) positively moderate the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and Environmental Performance (EP), such that the relationship is stronger when GIMS are effectively implemented.*

2.4 | Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Green Information Management Systems (GIMS), and Environmental Performance (EP). The model posits direct relationships between GHRM and EP, as well as between GIMS and EP. Additionally, GIMS is hypothesized to moderate the relationship between GHRM and EP, enhancing its effectiveness.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Participation

This study collected data from managers of medium- to large-scale manufacturing firms in Cambodia. Firms were defined as medium or large if they employed more than 50 workers. The participants were key decision-makers in their respective organizations, familiar with core activities and environmental practices. The manufacturing sector was chosen due to its significant contribution to Cambodia's economic development and its role as a major employer in the country.

A cross-sectional research design was adopted, utilizing a self-reported survey method to gather data. To enhance reliability and validity, multiple respondents from each firm were involved. Initially, a list of 25 manufacturing firms was randomly generated by contacting the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce. Human resource department heads were then approached with preliminary inquiries regarding their organizations' education or training programs focused on environmental sustainability. Only firms actively implementing Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices were invited to participate in the study.

The survey instrument was originally drafted in English and subsequently translated into Khmer following the back-translation method outlined by Brislin (1986). The translation process included modifications to ensure cultural relevance and linguistic clarity. Two rounds of piloting were conducted: the first with five participants and the second with eight participants. The initial round revealed ambiguities in some questionnaire items, prompting revisions. The subsequent round confirmed that the questionnaire was well-adapted to the Cambodian context.

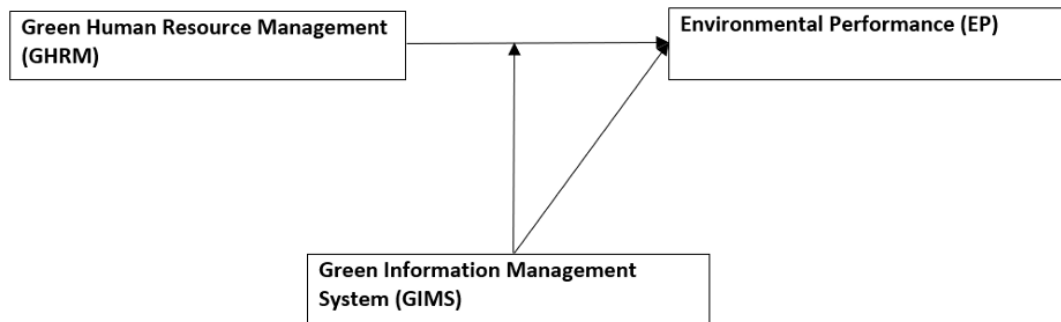


FIGURE 1 Conceptual Framework

3.2 | Measurement

The constructs of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Green Information Management Systems (GIMS), and Environmental Performance (EP) were measured using established scales from prior studies. The sources and corresponding items are detailed in Table 1.

The collected data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS software. SEM was chosen for its efficiency in analyzing latent variables and their interrelationships within a theoretical framework. This approach provided robust statistical estimation to validate the proposed model. Prior studies have successfully employed SEM in similar contexts (Haque et al. 2022, Li et al. 2022).

The study yielded 217 valid responses. Among the respondents, 202 (93%) were male, and the majority (71.6%) were aged between 20 and 40 years. Approximately 66% of participants held a master's degree, while 60% had between 1 and 6 years of work experience. The predominant religious demographic was Buddhist, accounting for 95.2% of the respondents, consistent with Cambodia's cultural context.

4 | RESULTS

The results of the hypothesis testing provide crucial insights into the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Green Information Management Systems (GIMS), and Environmental Performance (EP).

H1: Green Human Resource Management Enhances Environmental Performance

The first hypothesis (H1) posited that GHRM improves environmental performance. The results supported this hypothesis, with a Beta coefficient of 0.56 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. The positive estimate underscores that GHRM practices, such as green hiring, employee training, and sustainability-focused engagement, have a substantial impact on organizational environmental performance. These findings reinforce that organizations implementing

GHRM practices can achieve notable improvements in their sustainability performance.

H2: Green Information Management Systems Positively Influence Environmental Performance

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that the implementation of GIMS positively affects EP. This hypothesis was also supported, with a Beta coefficient of 0.16 and a p-value of 0.005, demonstrating statistical significance. The findings suggest that adopting GIMS, which involve collecting, managing, and analyzing environmental data through advanced information systems, significantly contributes to improving environmental performance.

H3: GIMS Moderates the Relationship Between GHRM and Environmental Performance

The third hypothesis (H3) examined whether GIMS positively moderates the relationship between GHRM and EP. The results indicated strong support, with a Beta coefficient of 0.70 and a p-value of less than 0.001. These findings highlight the pivotal role of GIMS in strengthening the impact of GHRM on environmental performance. By enabling real-time monitoring, analysis, and management of green HR initiatives, GIMS enhance organizational capacity to achieve superior environmental outcomes. The significant moderating effect of GIMS underscores its critical function in bridging gaps in data management, communication, and implementation of green HR strategies, thereby fostering a synergistic relationship between human resources and technology.

5 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 | Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Green Information Management

TABLE 1 Measurement Items and Sources

Construct	Items
Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) adapted from Renwick et al. (2013), Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment prioritizes candidates with environmental values. • Provides training focused on green practices. • Performance appraisals include environmental criteria. • Rewards employees for environmentally responsible behavior. • Effectively communicates green policies and initiatives.
Green Information Management Systems (GIMS) adapted from Dubey et al. (2017), Luthra et al. (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology is used to monitor environmental performance. • Environmental data is regularly collected and analyzed. • Employees access systems for reporting green practices or violations. • GIMS integrate green policies into daily operations. • GIMS ensure compliance with environmental regulations.
Environmental Performance (EP) adapted from Dangelico and Pontrandolfo (2015), Zhu et al. (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced energy consumption. • Effective waste management practices implemented. • Reduced environmental risks through green practices. • Compliance with local and international environmental standards. • Improved resource efficiency.

TABLE 2 Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Statement	Estimates	Significance	Result
H1: Green human resource management enhances environmental performance	0.56	0.001	Supported
H2: The implementation of a Green Information Management System (GIMS) positively influences Environmental Performance (EP).	0.16	0.005	Supported
H3: Green Information Management System positively moderates the relationship between green human resource management and environmental performance	0.70	0.001	Supported

Systems (GIMS) in improving Environmental Performance (EP). GHRM practices, including green recruitment, training, and performance evaluation, have been shown to positively impact organizational environmental outcomes by fostering a green workplace culture and aligning

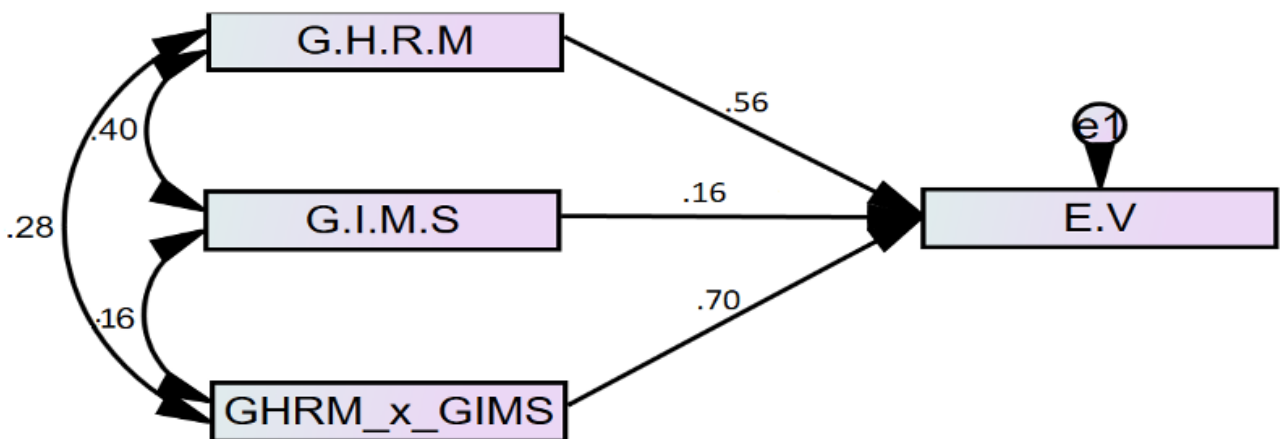


FIGURE 2 Path Analysis

employee goals with environmental objectives. These results are consistent with previous studies such as Renwick et al. (2013) and Cherian and Jacob (2012).

Even if the implementation of such systems more often than not leads to internal resistance (Lissillour 2021ab), the results further emphasize the critical enabling role of GIMS in improving the effectiveness of GHRM strategies. GIMS provides organizations with tools to monitor, evaluate, and refine their environmental practices, enhancing transparency and accountability. This finding supports previous research by Li et al. (2022), which underline the enabling capacity of GIMS in fostering sustainable practices. The implementation of GIMS enhances the efficiency of GHRM practices, as organizations equipped with sound information systems are better positioned to track and improve their environmental performance.

However, the study also underscores challenges in implementing GHRM and GIMS in developing countries. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited environmental awareness among employees, and cultural variables pose significant barriers to the effective adoption of green initiatives. This aligns with findings by Haddock-Millar et al. (2016), who identified workforce diversity and cultural differences as significant factors influencing the implementation of GHRM. Additionally, environmental management systems in these contexts are often in nascent stages, as noted by Chan (2011), necessitating the strategic alignment of human resources and technology.

The research also reveals the need for context-specific implementation of GHRM and GIMS practices. Local cultural and economic conditions play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of these practices, as evidenced by prior studies such as (Haldorai et al. 2022) and Amjad et al. (2021). For example, while the adoption of GHRM in Malaysia has been commendable (Nisar et al. 2021), similar efforts in other developing countries, such as Cambodia, may require tailored approaches to account for local challenges and opportunities.

GIMS have also been identified as key facilitators in integrating environmental concerns throughout supply chain networks, fostering close coordination with stakeholders to achieve environmental sustainability goals. This finding is particularly relevant for organizations in developing countries, where supply chain inefficiencies often hinder environmental performance, as noted by Khan et al. (2023).

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on green management practices by addressing the significant gaps in understanding the role of GHRM and GIMS in developing countries, while answering a recent call for more research into green innovation and environmental management in these contexts (Huang et al. 2024).

5.2 | Theoretical Implications

The study makes important theoretical contributions by introducing GIMS as a moderator in the GHRM-EP relationship, thereby expanding the understanding of how green HR practices interact with technological systems to achieve sustainability goals. While previous studies have established the direct effects of GHRM on EP, this research highlights

the synergistic relationship between GHRM and GIMS. The findings extend earlier frameworks, such as the Resource-Based View (RBV), by emphasizing the interplay between human resources and digital infrastructure in achieving sustainability outcomes. Notably, this research builds on foundational works such as Barney (1991) to contextualize the integration of green practices with organizational resources and capabilities.

Additionally, the study identifies the need for contextualizing green management practices in developing countries, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by these settings. This aligns with the Practice-based approach (Lissillour and Silva 2024), which underscores the importance of adapting practices to specific environmental and organizational contexts.

5.3 | Managerial Implications

The findings provide actionable insights for practitioners aiming to integrate green practices into their HR and operational strategies. Managers in manufacturing firms in developing countries should prioritize adopting GHRM practices, such as green recruitment, training, and performance appraisal, to instill environmental values among employees. Recognizing and rewarding environmentally responsible behaviors can further promote a green workplace culture.

The adoption of GIMS can enhance decision-making processes and ensure compliance with international sustainability standards. Tools like energy monitoring systems, recycling data collection, and green compliance tracking can significantly reduce environmental risks while fostering competitive advantages. By strategically integrating GHRM and GIMS, managers can create a cohesive, information-driven approach to sustainability, leveraging digital training modules, virtual team-building exercises, and automated performance tracking.

Firms that align their green practices with international standards will be better positioned to access global markets, improve their reputation, and enhance market competitiveness (Lissillour 2022). This study provides a roadmap for managers to develop and implement green strategies that align with organizational and environmental objectives.

5.4 | Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture dynamic changes in the relationships between GHRM, GIMS, and EP over time. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to explore the evolving impact of these practices. The study's focus on the manufacturing sector in Cambodia may limit the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the research to other industries, such as services or agriculture, could validate the results across diverse sectors. Additionally, incorporating larger and more diverse samples would strengthen the robustness of the findings.

Relying on self-reported questionnaires introduces the potential for response bias. Future studies could improve validity by incorporating the principles of practice-based research (Lissillour and Ruel 2023) to look at the impact of the implementation of GIMS on the organizational power structure. Exploring employee perceptions of GHRM practices and their internalization of green initiatives within organizations would provide valuable insights into the acceptability and effectiveness of these practices. Furthermore, despite the ethical challenges inherent to the use of artificial intelligence (Sahut et al. 2023ba), future research could look at its role in enhancing GIMS capabilities.

Future comparative studies across different developing countries could shed light on contextual factors influencing the adoption and effectiveness of GHRM and GIMS practices. These studies could also explore the interplay between cultural, economic, and regulatory factors in shaping green management practices.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed equally to conceptualization, writing, reviewing, editing and addressing reviewer comments.

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BOOK REVIEW

Chinese Business Ethics: Global Perspectives and Local Reconfiguration

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Abstract

This review examines the book "Chinese Business Ethics: Global Perspectives and Local Reconfiguration" (in Chinese 中国商业伦理学：全球视野与本土重构), edited in 2023 by Lü Li, Huang Haixiao, Cheng Jiang, Liu Haibo, Cao Zhenjie, Yang Liangcheng, Shi Feizhi, and Wang Qian, which offers a pioneering exploration of business ethics through the lens of Chinese philosophical traditions and global frameworks. The book addresses the dominance of Western theories in Chinese business ethics education and proposes a localized perspective by integrating Confucian, Daoist, and other indigenous ethical principles. Through seven thematic chapters, the authors analyze topics such as marketing, human resource management, accounting, sustainability, and entrepreneurship, providing theoretical insights and practical applications. Enriched with vivid case studies, this work bridges the gap between historical traditions and contemporary business challenges, offering a model of ethical decision-making that is both culturally rooted and globally resonant. This review highlights the contributions of the book to the field of business ethics and its potential to inspire future scholarship and practice.

KEYWORDS

Chinese business ethics, Confucian philosophy, Daoist ethics, Global-local perspective, Ethical decision-making, Localized ethical frameworks, Chinese philosophical traditions, Business ethics education.

The recently published 中国商业伦理学：全球视野与本土重构 (Chinese Business Ethics: Global Perspectives and Local Reconfiguration), edited by prominent scholars Lü Li, Huang Haixiao, Cheng Jiang, Liu Haibo, Cao Zhenjie, Yang Liangcheng, Shi Feizhi, and Wang Qian, offers a compelling and timely exploration of the intersection between traditional Chinese ethical thought and contemporary business practices in a globalized economy. Published by Enterprise Management Press in August 2023, the book aims to bridge a significant gap in the study and teaching of business ethics in China, which Western frameworks have often dominated. Through a rigorous synthesis of historical, philosophical, and practical insights, this work provides a much-needed localized perspective on business ethics, with broad implications for both academia and practice in line with the principles of Indigenous Scholarship (Rodríguez-Escobar 2024). At the heart of this book is the recognition that mainstream business ethics textbooks in China tend to rely heavily on Western philosophical and ethical frameworks (such as

(Sahut et al. 2023ba), often neglecting the rich tradition of Chinese ethical thought. This creates a disconnect between ethical theories taught in universities and the ethical practices observed in China's dynamic business environment. The authors set out to address this disconnect by drawing on both Western universal principles and Chinese philosophical traditions, such as Confucian values of "仁义礼智信" (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness), the Daoist concept of "道法自然" (following the natural way), and other foundational ideas from China's intellectual history. By weaving these elements into a unified theoretical and practical framework, the book provides a roadmap for constructing a distinctively Chinese approach to business ethics. The book is organized into seven chapters, each addressing critical aspects of business ethics. The opening chapter traces the historical evolution of Chinese business ethics, showcasing how ancient philosophical traditions and economic practices shaped early conceptions of ethical commerce. By highlighting the ethical principles espoused by figures such as Guan Zhong and Fan Li, the chapter situates Chinese business

ethics within a long-standing tradition of harmonizing individual and collective interests for societal benefit. Subsequent chapters delve into specific domains of business ethics. The second chapter explores ethical considerations in human resource management, juxtaposing Western and Chinese perspectives. It emphasizes the value of harmonious relationships, respect for individual potential, and collective welfare, rooted in Confucian and Daoist principles. This dual perspective not only provides theoretical depth but also offers practical insights into managing people in modern Chinese enterprises. The third chapter, focusing on marketing ethics, is particularly illuminating. It examines the ethical challenges of globalization and digital transformation which are focal topics in today's research agenda (Boyer 2024, Bonet and Lissillour 2023), with a special focus on consumer privacy and data ethics. The authors propose a framework that integrates the Western emphasis on transparency and fairness with Chinese values of moderation and sincerity. By emphasizing the ethical implications of marketing strategies in the digital age, the chapter underscores the importance of fostering trust and mutual respect between businesses and their customers. In its exploration of accounting ethics, the fourth chapter examines the ethical dimensions of financial management and reporting. Drawing parallels between Western concepts of accountability and the Chinese principle of "诚信" (integrity), the chapter highlights how ethical financial practices can enhance organizational sustainability and societal trust. Similarly, the fifth chapter addresses the ethical imperatives of sustainable development, proposing a fusion of global sustainability norms with traditional Chinese concepts of ecological harmony, such as "天人合一" (the unity of humanity and nature). The penultimate chapter discusses the role of entrepreneurial spirit in ethical innovation. It celebrates the rich legacy of Chinese business leaders who embody the ideals of "商以载道" (business as a vehicle for moral purpose) and advocates for a renewal of these ideals in the context of modern entrepreneurship. The authors argue that Chinese enterprises can lead the way in demonstrating how business success and ethical responsibility can be mutually reinforcing. Finally, the concluding chapter envisions the future of Chinese business ethics, advocating for a synthesis of Western and Chinese approaches. By promoting the idea of "伦理合一" (the unity of ethics) and "创造即责任" (creativity as responsibility), the authors call for a proactive and inclusive approach to addressing ethical challenges in a rapidly changing world. The book's strength lies not only in its comprehensive theoretical framework but also in its practical relevance. Through vivid case studies and real-world examples, the authors demonstrate how ethical principles can be applied to tackle contemporary challenges, from digital marketing and corporate governance to global trade and sustainability. These examples bring the theoretical concepts to life, making the book accessible and engaging for a diverse audience, including students, scholars, and practitioners. This book is an ambitious and groundbreaking contribution to the field of business ethics. It not only enriches our understanding of Chinese business practices but also provides a valuable lens through which global audiences can appreciate the unique contributions of Chinese ethical thought. The editors and contributors have succeeded in creating a work that is both

deeply rooted in local traditions and open to global perspectives, making it a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of ethics, culture, and commerce. By presenting a vision of business ethics that is distinctly Chinese yet globally relevant, this book sets a high standard for future scholarship in the field. Future studies in leadership could contribute by integrating ethical reflection into prior research (Sabbah 2024, Baio et al. 2024, Luo 2024, Quashigah and Amuzu 2024) which ignored ethical variables in the study of leadership. These studies will be able to the core of business decision-making and a testament to the enduring relevance of cultural heritage in shaping ethical practices in the modern world.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed to conceptualization, writing, reviewing, editing and addressing reviewer comments.

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FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

None reported.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interests.

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