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Kanglei Meng

John Baker

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Abstract

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Keywords

gender, leadership, Confucianism, China, education

Chinese Higher Educator Perceptions Toward Leadership Effectiveness in Regard to Gender

Kanglei Meng *Beijing Normal University, Beijing, People's Republic of China*

John Baker *Associate Professor, Organizational Leadership, Western Kentucky University*

Abstract

This article discusses Chinese educator perceptions of effective leadership behaviors in order to determine how these teachers define effectiveness and whether a correlation exists between their perception and leaders' gender. Factors include conscious and unconscious gender bias, Chinese culture, historical background, and identity. As a male-dominated country, China has been deeply influenced by Confucianism; hence, limited attention has been on female leadership. The article identifies and reviews three Women's Revolutions in China and their effects in the past century in order to predict the status of female leadership. The researcher used the Chinese version of the LPI survey and conducted the investigation in more than 20 Chinese universities. The results indicate a significant difference in the survey respondents' perceptions of male and female leaders.

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For most of recorded history, women were excluded from formal management roles (Rhode, 2003). Even today, while the number of female leaders is increasing, conscious and unconscious biases continue to produce double standards for male and female leaders. However, according to Rhode (2003), the lack of consensus regarding the problem and how to solve it is a major issue. The reality of gender inequality in leadership opportunities is pervasive; however, the perceptions are limited from both male and female and from both leader and follower perspectives. The equality gap between men and women in Chinese culture is even greater than elsewhere. As the most influential philosophy, Confucian ethics have advocated the subservience of women to men as a natural rule for society. Women were generally regarded as incapable of education and viewed as insignificant members in the family (Davin, 1975).

A review of studies regarding gender and leadership from the 1970s to the present reveal a gradually increasing role for women and their importance in the workplace. Many report leadership distinctions exist between women and men (Book, 2009), such as communication styles (Spender & Bardin, 1985). They suggest that these differences may impact interactions between leaders and followers and produce various outcomes. Although such studies and reports help to revise traditional gender stereotypes, new stereotypes emerge. Research has revealed certain persistent and pervasive patterns that are caused by conscious and unconscious gender bias (Rhode, 2003);

more so for "older" cultures—those that have endured for millennia rather than mere centuries. Each generation establishes new stereotypes, which also provide updated information about gender studies and make consensus more difficult regarding gender bias in the leadership field. In addition, the controversial results of diverse studies blur the focus of female leaders' advantages and potentials and question their strength as leaders. This kind of thinking not only decreases the credibility of women leadership studies, but also weakens the influence of women leadership in society.

Compared to similar studies in Western cultures, Chinese scholars have conducted limited research for several reasons. First, few scholars have investigated women's leadership in China. Due to the short history of these studies, only a few academic institutions are sufficiently advanced to be aware of this issue (Sun, 2015). Second, there is a lack of academic methodology (Bai, 2014; Sun, 2015). The majority of Chinese scholars use traditional experience-based rather than scientific methods to conduct research. Hence, most conclusions are from only Western studies, which may not adequately fit the Chinese context. Third, a lack of attention exists relative to following up on women leadership studies. Presently, Chinese scholars' knowledge of gender differences in leadership is approximately at the point of Western research in the 1980s-1990s. Studies should be based on native culture and should learn from developing areas within the specific

culture (Sun, 2015). Fourth, there are limited sample types (Bai, 2014). The majority of Chinese women's leadership studies target business fields, and only limited studies have been conducted in Chinese higher education. Due to these limitations, the perception of female leaders in China is more difficult to research and analyze.

The motivation driving scholars to pay more attention to the parity in research on female leadership and gender, on one hand, is due to the growing proportion of female workers and the increasing influence of women leaders in business, politics, and education. Conversely, the undervaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders is not based on their capability but, rather, on their gender (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014).

Women's Status in History

As a country rooted in Confucianism, China has developed a male-dominated culture. The hierarchy of authority in this system was based on *Ren Lún*, or "relationship-defined obligations," in which there were expected obligations when individuals were involved in certain patterns of interactions. Based on a hierarchy of authority, this system defined relationships in five types: (1) the so-called *Wu Lún*, or the "Five Cardinal Relationships," including the government and citizens ("ruler and subjects" in the olden days); (2) parents and offspring ("father and son"); (3) husband and wife; (4) siblings ("younger and older brothers"); and (5) friends ("male friends") (Wang & Chee, 2011). These were unequal dyadic relationships that indicated the absolute power and authority of the male in this particular value system. Women were considered temporary members of the household and had no rights to possess, inherit, or intervene. As temporary members, women were considered unworthy or incapable of education (Leung, 2003). Confucius even stated, "Ignorance is the virtue of a woman." This traditional ideology influenced the Chinese mindset and inwardly shackled Chinese women for hundreds of years (Wang & Chee, 2011).

Another principle of Confucianism regarding the division of labor by gender was that men take roles outside the home; women take those inside the home. This standard of virtuousness continues to influence the Chinese definition of a "good woman" in modern times. Furthermore, women were restricted not only to live inside, but also to obey without questioning (Jaschok & Shui, 2012). A rule entitled the "Three Obediences" also governed a woman's behavior. The first obedience was a constraint for unmarried girls to obey their fathers and brothers. Second, a married woman must obey her husband; third, a widow must obey her adult sons. In general, the Confucian

moralists established three standards of virtue for Chinese women: ignorance, remaining inside, and subservience. If a woman breaks any of these three rules, she is considered as not following *Fùdào*, which is the moral code for women (Jaschok & Shui, 2012).

Three Women's Revolutions in China

The first revolution for Chinese women was during the Mao era. Early communist leaders supported the first women's movement, which was the May Fourth Movement (1915-1921) which was the first time Chinese women fought for their rights and freedom (Leung, 2003). Their new identity and image was created by some female icons in different professions (Chen, 1988). New women encouraged others who thought they were incapable of studying and had to stay at home to explore their new life.

In the early 1980s, the second revolution to promote women's status in China was brought about by the Deng's Economic Reform. In order to facilitate markets in the new socialist era, the exploration of women's capabilities and equal opportunities could potentially assist development. A supporting and developing environment was established for females to participate in professional workplaces by implementing new policies (Qiang, Han, & Niu, 2009). The supportive reforms and open policies issued since the early 1980s includes the Labor Insurance Regulations of 1984; the Labor Prohibition Regulations of 1990 (Rosen, 1993), and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women in 1992 (Rhode, 2003).

On a positive note, supportive conditions have been created for female participation and advancement by the Chinese government. However, as a country that has been influenced by male-dominated culture, not everyone has accepted these changes. The new dramatic change and special attention to women in the workplace has caused dissatisfaction not only from male counterparts, but also from female peers. The reform increased a type of invisible discrimination against women in terms of hiring and promotion; e.g., when companies had a good excuse to fire employees, they laid off female employees first in order to avoid the potential cost and punishment from the new policies (Rosen, 1993).

The third revolution upgraded national support for gender equality in Chinese society. President Jiang Zemin represented the government of the People's Republic of China and announced at the 1995 Fourth World Women's Congress of the United Nations that China would carry out the principle of gender equality as a Fundamental State Policy. He also indicated the purpose for implementation

of the policy of gender equality was to fully support and promote social development (Qiang et al., 2009). To make an announcement in front of the world illustrated the Chinese government's determination to put its promise into effect. President Zemin also indicated the purpose for implementation of the policy of gender equality was to fully support and promote social development (Qiang et al., 2009).

In order to implement a gender equality policy, two significant national plans for women's development were structured and implemented. The policy was formulated to promote more women to lead groups, especially appointing female leaders in male-dominated fields such as industry and enterprise (Selection and Compilation of Important Literature Since the 14th National Congress [SCILSNC], 1997). The negative effect of this new policy was the lack of a standard process for promoting women which resulted in opinions that promotion decisions were unfair and unprofessional, reinforcing the image of the female leader as "less capable."

Current Women's Status in China

MasterCard Index on Women's Advancement (MIWA) is an annual index of female workforce and leaders in the Asia Pacific region that has been compiled and reported for the past 10 years (2007-2016). The first component of the index, capability, serves as an indicator of the Female-to-Male Secondary and Tertiary School Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) ratio and supports that progress is being made for women's access to higher education and knowledge to compete with their male counterparts. China's GER ratio was 103.5 in secondary and 115.3 in tertiary education in 2011 (115 women for every 100 men).

The second component of the MIWA report is employment. According to the 2016 index report, the Female-to-Male Regular Employment ratio was 84.1 (84.1 women for every 100 men), which indicates the number of female regular employment in China was similar to male regular employment. Another employment score, workforce participation, was 83.2, which indicates the percent of Chinese women working normally or informally divided by the total female population.

According to the 2016 index report from MasterCard investigation, the overall score of leadership in China was 34.7 (34.7 women for every 100 men). The score of business owners was 40.5 and business leaders was 33.4. Female political leaders ranked 30.9 compared to 100 males. Thus, while some aspects of Chinese society are moving closer to gender parity, awareness of and support for women's advancement in leadership continues to be

far behind. Still heavily influenced by traditional culture, social expectations for women remain focused on their roles in the home and as "followers" in social relationships.

The Chinese Women Living Situation Annual Report (CWLSAR, 2015) includes seven first-level indicators that measure Chinese city women's life quality. The CWLSAR also shows the social perceptions of women influenced by socialization based on the past 10 years (2005-2015). The seven indicators measure maintaining a happy and harmonious family life, developing healthy bodies, possessing love of life, having a secure and stable place to live, having a job that exemplifies personal values, increased family income, and living in a pollution free environment. It is not difficult to recognize that five of seven indicators are related to a female's family life, while only one is connected to life in the workplace. This shows that investigators or the society believe success or failure in the workplace does not influence the quality of life for Chinese city women.

Interestingly, the CWLSAR (2015) lists nine sources of stress for Chinese city women: employee reduction, intensified workplace competition, inability to demonstrate potential, uncertainty of promotion, salary not matching qualifications, antagonism among co-workers, unrealistic production expectations, doubtful workplace prognosis, and difficulty in balancing career and family. These nine sources of stress for Chinese women prove they are committed to the work, they desire recognition for their competitive performance, and they can gain satisfaction from successful work. However, none of these characteristics fit the expectation of society.

Chinese Higher Education

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) introduced a type of private higher education institution during the Eastern Zhou dynasty. However, only sons went to study in the institution. Paying for daughters was considered a *waste of money* because, according to the traditional *Wu Lún* relationship mentioned in the previous section, daughters were perceived as temporary members in the family. Based on historical records, Confucius had more than 3000 students during his life. Later, during the blossom of the private schools, many scholars operated their own institutions in different places (Min, 2004). Hence, Chinese indigenous higher education, both public and private, includes two and a half thousand years of history, and it shows evidence of Confucianism influencing not only Chinese higher education institutions, but also Chinese people's minds for thousands of years.

In 1922, new education reform legislation was enacted and influenced by the American university model. By 1949,

there were 205 higher education institutions, including 124 public universities and colleges; 21 missionary universities and colleges; and 60 private universities and colleges (Min, 2004). However, all the universities and colleges became national institutions after the founding of the People's Republic of China. The central government took over all higher education institutions and restructured them according to the Soviet model until the 1980s. With the rapid development of a market economy, flourishing improvements in science and technology, and the fast growth in individual living standards, the government recognized that higher education was the most important foundation for long-term economic success. A series of reformations has since been implemented. The old structure of the higher education system, which nationalized all institutions by the central government, did not fit in the dramatically changing society. Enrollments in the early 1980s were one million compared to 13 million in 2001. To adapt to this new reality, the Provisional Stipulations for the Establishment of *Minban* Higher Education Institutions were issued in 1993. The *Minban* (non-state-run) Higher Education Institutions were then allowed to legally open.

The current Chinese higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with 2,824 universities and colleges; including 1,202 regular full-time universities; 465 private universities; 295 adult higher education institutions; and 1,327 higher vocational schools. The system encompasses 32.01 million students and 1.57 million faculty members (Ministry of Education, 2014). The number of full-time female higher educators increased from 119,000 in 1993 to 364,500 in 2004 (Qiang et al., 2009). The number of female higher educators has tripled within 10 years, while their proportion of all faculty members expanded from 30.96% to 42.46% (Wei, 1995).

According to Zhu, Sun, and Zhao (2007), considerable variation exists between male and female recruitment. Certain job sectors require hiring men rather than women. The percentage and number of female higher educators does not reveal the entire picture of women's status in higher education. Among female faculty in 2004, a large proportion were entry-level professors (teaching assistants) and lecturers (assistant professors). These two groups of female faculty represented 67% of the total number of female higher educators. In both junior-level teaching groups, the number of female faculty approximated the amount of male counterparts and presented the largest percentage of female faculty in 2004 (see Table 1). From 1993 to 2004, the number of mid-level female higher educators increased by almost five times, while the percentage grew nearly 200%. Although the mid-level teaching group expanded rapidly, it remained a relatively small percentage of female

faculty. A similar situation existed for high-level female faculty, which present the smallest group (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Number of Female Faculty in Chinese Higher Education*

Year	Number and percentage of female professors	Number and percentage of female associate professors	Number and percentage of female lectures	Number and percentage of female teaching assistants
1993	2,929	20,921	53,145	34,667
	12.01%	21.93%	32.69%	41.36%
2004	16,045	95,220	127,825	93,756
	19.28%	39.25%	45.50%	52.79%

Note. Adapted from *China Education Statistical Yearbook* (1993, 2004) (as cited in Qiang et al., 2009, p. 95).

According to Qiang et al. (2009), two types of leadership are found in Chinese higher education structure: academic and administrative. The small proportion of high-level professional female educators puts women at a disadvantage to compete for academic leadership positions. For administrative leadership, the proportion of female supervisors also is very small and has increased slowly. The proportion increased from 13.7% to 21.7% from 1993 to 2004.

Hypotheses

A research study was conducted to gain insight into Chinese higher educators' perceptions toward leadership effectiveness. The hypotheses were:

1. Both male and female higher educators perceive male leaders as more effective than female leaders in general.
2. In regard to specific leadership practices/behaviors, male leaders are perceived as more effective than female leaders at Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Challenging the Process.
3. Female leaders are perceived as more effective than their male counterparts at Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart.

The study involved higher educators from approximately 26 universities in China, targeted all levels of professors, and utilized Kouzes and Posner's (2012) *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI). The LPI provides insight into effective leadership behaviors by measuring competencies when leaders are performing at their personal best. Six questions examine five leadership competencies: (a) Modeling the Way, (b) Inspiring a Shared Vision, (c) Challenging the Process, (d) Enabling Others to Act, and (e) Encouraging the Heart. Many researchers have

indicated that these competencies represent highly effective leadership (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007).

The participants rated leadership practices on a scale where 1 = Almost never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Seldom, 4 = Once in a while, 5 = Occasionally, 6 = Sometimes, 7 = Fairly often, 8 = Usually, 9 = Very frequently, and 10 = Almost always. The sum of the scores of the six questions for each of the five leadership practices represented the score of each participant. Each participant was asked to identify one most effective male leader and one most effective female leader, then complete the LPI survey on each. Additionally, demographic information collected from each individual provided descriptive data to include age, gender, organizational division, academic discipline, and years of working in higher education. Participants also rated the two leaders on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 = leader least effective and 10 = most effective.

Data were analyzed using a 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (gender of leader) MANOVA to correlate between male Chinese higher educators' perceptions of male and female leaders as well as female Chinese higher educators' perceptions of male and female leaders. Repeated Measures GLMs were conducted with leader gender as the within-subjects independent variable (IV) and participant gender as the between-subjects independent variable (IV); the dependent variable was the overall rating of leadership effectiveness and the five specific leadership practice scores.

Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted both male and female higher educators would perceive male leaders as more effective than females. Results show that leader gender does not affect perceptions of overall leadership effectiveness; i.e., male and female leaders are perceived to have similar levels of overall effectiveness.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that male leaders would be perceived as more effective than females at Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Challenging the Process. Results show that leader gender affects perceptions related to Modeling the Way i.e., male leaders are perceived as more effective than females. The same results occur regarding perceptions related to Inspiring a Shared Vision and Challenging the Process and support Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted female leaders would be perceived as more effective than their male counterparts at Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. Results show that leader gender affects perceptions of Enabling Others to Act. Female leaders are perceived less

effective than males at Enabling Others to Act. Relative to Encouraging the Heart, results indicate that leader gender did not affect perceptions; i.e., male and female leaders are perceived to have similar levels of Encouraging the Heart.

Discussion

Hypothesis One

A difference was not found between the perceptions of Chinese higher educators toward their male and female leaders' effectiveness in general. Male and female leaders are perceived to have similar levels of overall effectiveness. Western literature reviews include debates regarding gender and leadership effectiveness (Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Taylor, Morin, Cohn, Clark, & Wang, 2008). However, in general, a consensus can be seen in the results of this study, as both Chinese male and female higher educators rate male leaders the same as their counterparts, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis Two

In regard to specific leadership practices/behaviors, male leaders are perceived as more effective than females at Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Challenging the Process. Findings indicate subordinates' gender does not affect the results. Regardless of gender, higher educators rate male leaders more effective than females at Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Challenging the Process. This consistency may demonstrate simply male leaders receive higher ratings because of their performance, rather than their gender.

From the literature review, several possible reasons explain the findings. One may be women leaders indeed perform poorly in higher education. However, the feedback from participants indicates some had never experienced a female leader; some had female leaders previously, but none of these female leaders had actual power to enact leadership behaviors. If so, the background of participants and their lack of experience with female leaders may have affected the survey results in unintended and unknown ways.

Second, although three Women's Revolutions have occurred in China in the past century, the Chinese culture continues to be influenced by thousands of years of Confucian ideals. The social expectation for women is to obey men and to balance all their social roles as wife, daughter, mother, and employee. The expectation puts women in the role of follower rather than leader. Hence,

even when a woman is in a position of authority, she may feel she has less power to act and to influence.

Third, due to denial of the existence of gender inequality, both women and men pay little attention to how to develop male and female leaders in different ways. Acting as though no difference exists between genders undermines the opportunities to discover women's strengths in leadership positions and to further improve them.

Fourth, higher education is one of the most traditional professions in China. Confucianism has influenced Chinese culture for thousands of years through the original classroom. This philosophy has been delivered for generations through education. Hence, educators have been most influenced by traditional philosophy. They view it as a moral standard and teach students based on their moral principles. Hence, it may explain the reason both males and females believe males are better leaders.

Last, individuals working in higher education are very culturally influenced; a common internal factor in these individuals includes being less ambitious. From the authors' personal observations, the primary purpose of most female high school students who choose to teach is to have a stable job in the future, which for a young woman in China often means a job that is not dangerous, tiring, or challenging; provides a decent salary; and allows her to easily find a husband. Thus, the very career decision of these young women predicts that they likely will be less ambitious to advance and to compete. The characteristics and personality of this group of females have laid the foundations of female leaders in this field. Hence, it is understandable why both male and female subordinates might have lower perceptions regarding the effectiveness of female leaders in higher education.

Hypothesis Three

This study failed to support the predicted significant differences between Chinese higher education leaders based on gender in the areas of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. The results show female leaders are not perceived as better than male leaders in these two areas; instead, male leaders are seen as more effective in Enabling Others to Act, and no difference exists relative to Encouraging the Heart.

Based on the literature review, females were predicted to be more effective in Encouraging the Heart, although the data failed to support it. Two possible assumptions could explain the results. The context of female leaders in Chinese literature may be very different from Western literature, as females may not have the specific and practical power to apply when in leadership roles. As leaders who are

not accustomed to acting like their male counterparts (in leadership roles), females may not have awareness of their strengths and how to use them to influence others. In such context, female Chinese leaders may not fit the leadership practices pattern found in Western literature. In addition, they may not understand the concept of Encouraging the Heart and how it feels. Power distance is one of four well-known cultural value dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980). Those in a high power distance culture accept a higher degree of unequally distributed power from individuals who are older, wiser, or in a higher position than those in a low power distance culture. A typical high-power distance culture country, China has an unequal relationship between high and low power in the hierarchy social system. As a result, Chinese leaders may not feel the need to make an effort to receive respect, loyalty, and commitment. The culture inherently influences individuals to obey, respect, and believe those who are older, wiser, or in higher positions, which may result in a very low social expectation for leaders to encourage the hearts of those they lead.

Table 2 presents the general rating of the five exemplary leadership practices. Leaders in

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Five Practices (average score 60 possible points)

Gender	Model the Way	Inspire a Shared Vision	Challenge the Process	Enable Others to Act	Encourage the Heart
Female	42.27	40.63	40.27	42.34	42.33
Male	43.69	42.96	42.22	43.93	43.48

higher education are rated highest at Enabling Others to Act. All higher education institutions in China are government owned. When employees sign a contract, the regulations are very strict and defined, such as the number of hours to work each semester, the number of papers that must be published per year, and the frequency and length of time for studying abroad as a visiting scholar. Work performance is related to salary, evaluation, and promotion, which indicated clearly motivating employees is unnecessary, as subordinates know their responsibilities without question.

A comparison of results of the five leadership practices and overall effectiveness shows that male leaders are perceived as more effective than females in four of five dimensions of leadership behaviors, although they are seen to have similar levels of overall effectiveness. These inconsistent results may show potential gender bias. These results also align with comments made to the researcher while conducting the study. The existence of any kind of gender bias in the Chinese workplace was repeatedly denied, with an attempt to convince the author that leaders are different because of personality, rather than gender.

This indicates individuals hold different opinions about leader behaviors and a general perception toward gender.

One possible reason for this finding may be due to information about the purpose of the study. The researcher was asked to inform the participants of the purpose of the survey. When participants read about the topic of female leadership, they may have been sensitive to this issue. Several rated behaviors of female leaders in the middle, yet gave them an overall score of 10. This inconsistency may indicate participants chose to hide their actual feelings in order to avoid suspicion of gender bias.

The overall rating also could reveal the true insight of subordinate perceptions by considering the feeling toward male and female leaders. Female leaders may have less opportunity to use the five leadership behaviors due to their limited power. Subordinates may experience difficulties in relating those behaviors to their powerless female leaders.

Limitations

Limited research has been conducted in China relative to female leadership. As a relatively early study, there are several limitations that can be avoided in future research. The lack of female leaders was the primary limitation that impacted the results. Two sets of questions were included in the survey: one evaluated male leaders, and the other female leaders. However, from feedback and suggestions at the end of the survey, many participants had never experienced a female leader, and had to reflect on their high school or college female teachers to complete the survey. Some expressed their concern regarding the limited number of female leaders to rate, as most of these leaders had no legitimate power, only a title; i.e., these females had no authority to apply leadership behaviors in their positions. Some participants felt it was unfair to evaluate female leaders who had less power than their male counterparts. Also, individuals who believe female leaders are less effective than males may not recognize that these females have less power to influence compared to their male counterparts.

The second limitation was the small amount of Chinese leadership literature and research. Chinese education institutions do not offer majors in leadership; therefore, the participants had no training or education on leadership concepts and behaviors. Although the five exemplary leadership practices in the LPI survey discussed general leadership behaviors, such as listening to diverse opinions, sharing vision with followers, and finding ways to obtain feedback, Chinese higher educators may have a very limited and narrow understanding of those leadership practices.

The third limitation also related to the understanding of the survey. The translated Chinese version of the LPI survey was provided by Kouzes and Posner through the Wiley Publishing Company, and the author was not authorized to modify the words. However, based on the feedback, the language in the Chinese version was too simple to accurately understand, particularly to those without a leadership knowledge background. Some measurement terms were very similar in Chinese; e.g., “fairly often” and “usually” are relatively the same in Chinese.

Fourth, the research context (higher education) created limitations. The main reason for choosing the field of higher education was ease of sampling in the cross-country study. Obtaining permission to gather data on a large scale in China is difficult. Chinese higher education exists in a very traditional atmosphere due to its thousands of years of background and high-power position in society. It is very possible that, in business, politics, and other fields, distinguishable opinions and debates may exist regarding the effectiveness of male and female leaders. Not so much in higher education in China.

From the survey results regarding the perception of leader effectiveness (the last question on the survey), translating the overall leadership effectiveness question was difficult. Participants unfamiliar with the leadership process had limited context to provide an accurate assessment. Future researchers should consider other ways to inquire about overall leadership effectiveness perception given the cultural context.

Implications for Further Study

As one of the most traditional professions, higher education may be influenced by the culture and constrained by social norms. Those who work in the field may hold a relative point of view. Conversely, this profession plays a vital role in Chinese society, as higher educators are perceived to influence future generations. Higher education may be very different from other professions, such as business and politics, yet it indicates a basic condition of female leadership in China. Hence, a comparison of perceptions in higher education, in business, and in other professions can be conducted in future studies, which may illustrate the differences in various professions.

The results of this study indicate a general Chinese understanding of leadership behaviors when observing leader practices. As a very simple, detailed, and basic survey in the leadership field in the past three decades, the LPI was confusing to several participants. Some could not complete the survey because they did not understand the descriptive items. Hence, a localized leadership practices

questionnaire translation would provide more accurate results.

Further qualitative research could be conducted based on the outcomes from this study. The results create a primary and basic understanding about the status of female leadership in China. Follow-up, one-on-one, or focus group interviews may possibly illustrate the reason for the differences in the scores. Additionally, the interview questions could be posed based on the results of this study rather than on Western studies.

This research also shows that individuals may have little knowledge regarding the strengths of female leaders. More studies are needed to explore Chinese female leadership styles. As the difference between male and female leaders on Encouraging the Heart was not significant, it is possible that women are superior in this aspect. Future studies could investigate the influence of gender on this leadership practice, particularly in other professions.

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