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WHAT MAKES A FACE-SAVING LEADERSHIP STYLE: THE DUAL EFFECTS OF UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE AND POWER DISTANCE CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract:

Background: The self-protective leadership style (SPL) prioritizes the safety and security of the leader and the group while focusing on maintaining status and avoiding mistakes. In this leadership style, leaders may focus on face-saving behavior, maintaining their position, and avoiding making bold decisions that could lead to failure. Amid the controversy, this perspective raises further questions about what factors drive the formation of this leadership style. On the other hand, cultures that value uncertainty avoidance may be more likely to support self-protective leadership because of (1) the need for stability: people in these cultures may prefer leaders who prioritize stability and security over innovation or taking chances; this may result in leaders who are cautious and avoid making risky decisions, and (2) a focus on rules: clear rules and structures are important in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, so leaders who follow established procedures may be perceived as more reliable.
Purpose: This study focused on elaborating the dual effects of cultural values of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance cultural values in shaping the face-saving attitude dimension of self-protective leadership.
Design/methodology/approach: GLOBE Project data at the country level were used to elaborate on the phenomenon. The study used multivariate analysis that elaborated on the moderating role of the regression technique. To further test the assumption of Power Distance as a moderator, a series of further regression tests was conducted to see whether the Power Distance variable was confirmed as a moderator. The simple slope analysis technique was used to observe characteristics of the moderating role of Power Distance on the associative relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-Saver.
Findings/Results: The findings showed that Uncertainty Avoidance had a positive relationship with the formation of the face-saving dimension of SPL. At the same time, the expected contextual factor of Power Distance did not influence the strength of the positive association between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-Saver; instead, it had a dual effect with Uncertainty Avoidance in forming the Face-Saver orientation.
Conclusion: The findings implied the possibility of trickiness in obtaining the effective leadership practices, which could be dominated by the Face-Saver orientation when high Uncertainty Avoidance and high Power Distance cultural values exist.
Originality/Value (State of The Art): The results of this study indicate that reducing Power Distance orientation can reduce the formation of Face-saver characteristics in organizations. Future research must test whether the presence of a flat structure and cross-functional teams can reduce the formation of face-saving practices in organizations.

Keywords: face-saver, leadership, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, self-protective leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Although not always following the facts, bad images or news from an organization can harm the organization's business processes. Not many parties are interested in partnering with organizations with a negative image (Woshinsky, 2008). However, a different situation will occur during a crisis, where a leadership style is needed that protects the elements of the organization (self-protective activities), including the organization's image, so that it can save its business processes. However, on the other hand, a leadership style that protects the elements of the organization (Self-Protective Leadership style, SPL) is generally not considered beneficial to the organization (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Several characteristics of SPL make this leadership style tend to have an unfavourable contribution to the organization (De Luqueet al. 2008; House et al. 2004), namely focusing on self-defence. Leaders who protect themselves prioritize their stance and avoid taking risks. This can hinder innovation and growth in the organization, in this case, inhibiting collaboration. Furthermore, the emphasis on "saving face" can impede open communication and honest feedback, which are essential for teamwork and problem-solving, allowing competition between employee levels, where self-protective leaders may pit their employees against each other to maintain their status. This situation is speculated to create a destructive and demotivating work environment for staff, resulting in limited organizational learning. The reluctance to admit mistakes or take responsibility for failures hinders the understanding and improvement of leaders and teams.

However, there are rare situations where, to a limited extent, a protective leadership style with face-saving characteristics of the leader may be necessary (De Luque et al. 2008; House et al. 2004; Woshinsky, 2008), such as when dealing with a highly political environment. However, in the long run, cultivating a culture of trust, transparency, and risk-taking is much more effective for organizational success. Furthermore, while generally not ideal, SPL can provide specific benefits in certain situations. Some examples of situations where SPL may be needed (House et al. 2004; De Luque et al. 2008; Woshinsky, 2008). The first example is the extreme political environment; in this case, when a leader joins a highly politicized and fraudulent organization, he or she may need to act defensively to protect his or her position and avoid trouble. This may involve managing the flow of information appropriately or creating strong relationships to maintain their position. Nevertheless, this defensive strategy does not focus on long-term growth or success (Woshinsky, 2008). The next example is the way of handling crisis: after a crisis, a leader who can protect himself or herself and the organization to minimize damage to the organization's reputation is a good first step (House et al. 2004; De Luque et al. 2008). Both situations, indicatively, may include acting quickly to control the situation and manage information (House et al. 2004). In this case, it can also happen that the characteristic of defending oneself whenever there is a problem can hinder transparency and prevent the process of self-evaluation, which in turn can be detrimental to the organization in the future. It is important to note that this argument is a limited scenario, and the potential drawbacks of self-protective leadership may outweigh the benefits in many cases.

A protective leadership style (SPL) prioritizes the safety and security of the leader and his/her group, but this is done with a focus on maintaining status and avoiding mistakes. This approach has advantages and disadvantages (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007; De Luque et al. 2008; House et al. 2004). Some of the advantages of SPL are, first, the creation of stability. Self-protective leaders often prioritize compliance with established procedures and rules. This can create stability and predictability in the team, especially in uncertain times. The next issue is the focus on security. In this case, the leader prioritizes the welfare of the group, which can be beneficial in situations where safety is a primary concern. The last is maintaining harmony. Leaders will consciously "save face" for themselves and others to avoid unnecessary conflict in the team.

Some indication of losses due to the implementation of SPL in organizations (De Luque et al. 2008; House et al. 2004) is the possibility of stagnation, which is caused by focusing too much on procedures, which can hinder creativity and innovation; the next is the issue of limited growth. Protective leaders may be reluctant to take risks or delegate tasks, which can hinder individual and team development. The third sign of harm is low team morale. The emphasis on status and avoiding mistakes can create a culture of fear and limit open communication, and the final issue is that unrealistic expectations, because leaders are too focused on maintaining a positive image, can make it difficult to

admit mistakes or learn from failures. However, the protective leadership style is not always deemed to have a detrimental effect.

On the other hand, it is also important to note that protective leadership is more acceptable in some cultures than in others. In cultures that emphasize social hierarchy and "saving face," this style may be seen as a sign of strong leadership (House et al. 2004; Chhokar et al. 2007). In general, while protective leadership has many benefits, it can have significant drawbacks. Effective leaders must find a balance between protecting their team and fostering an environment that encourages growth, innovation, and open communication (House & Mitchell, 1975; De Luque et al. 2008). The main issue is how the Self-Protective Leadership is developed in organizations.

The concept of Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) culture from the GLOBE 2004 project (House et al. 2004) can explain why the Self-Protective Leadership (SPL) style can emerge in some cultures. The Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) cultural dimension is defined as the extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to reduce uncertainty about future events (House et al. 2004). In this case, there are several possibilities that the two constructs can be correlated (House et al. 2004), namely, first, the need for stability. Cultures with high UA tend to value clear rules, structure, and predictability. This can lead to a preference for leaders who prioritize security and avoid taking risks, which is in line with SPL. Next are threat reduction efforts. Leaders with high UA cultures may adopt self-protective behaviors to minimize threats and uncertainty to themselves and the group. This can involve strict adherence to procedures and a focus on maintaining the status quo, and finally, strong UA can weaken the positive effects of other leadership styles. Overemphasis on security in SPL may hinder innovation and open communication, which are essential for adaptation in an uncertain environment.

Based on the literature review, there are several prospective theories to elaborate the relationship between UA culture and SPL, especially the Face-Saver (FS) dimension that forms it, the first is the Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) (Offerman, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Hesmert & Vogel, 2023; Schyns, 2006; Stephan & Pathak, 2016; Tavares et al. 2018). This theory implies that cultural values such as UA can shape what people expect from leaders. Furthermore, in a high UA culture, people may like leaders who have SPL characteristics based on the Psychological Safety Theories (PST) perspective (Edmondson, 1999). Studies indicate a complex relationship between the impact of UA and SPL on teams (House et al. 2004). High UA can hinder psychological safety, which is very important for learning and innovation. Effective leaders, even in high UA cultures, may need to find a way to balance safety by creating a safe space to take calculated risks. In addition, referring to the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1975), the relationship between UA and SPL should not be deterministic. Effective leaders can adjust their leadership style to the context of the situation, including the consensus of organizational members on the perception of power distance.

The Power Distance (PD) cultural orientation refers to the power of a social hierarchy in a society (Chhokar et al. 2007; House et al. 2004). The Power Distance Index (PDI) measures the extent to which those at the bottom of the hierarchy accept that social power or standing is not distributed evenly in society (Chhokar et al. 2007). A high-Power Distance setting indicates that a culture accepts inequality in power differences. High Power Distance (PD) cultures encourage bureaucracy and favor rank and authority, while a low Power Distance Index in a culture means that the culture favors flat organizational structures with decentralized decision-making responsibilities (Chhokar et al. 2007; House et al. 2004). Low Power Distance cultures prefer a participative management style. Literature review shows that people at the bottom of the social hierarchy tend to prefer systems that distribute power evenly, while people at the top of the hierarchy prefer things to be as they are, according to their hierarchical status. People at the top of the hierarchy do not want to lose any of the power they have accumulated. With this perspective, this research proposes the cultural dimension of Power Distance as a contingent factor in the relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and the Face-Saver dimension of SPL, in this case, the researcher suspects that the association of Uncertainty Avoidance to Face-Saver will be stronger in a cultural background that supports Power Distance (PD).

However, in research practice, the effects of culture tend to be underappreciated in homogeneous country samples due to the limited range of cultural diversity (Franke & Richey, 2010). Smaller samples covering a wider range of countries may allow researchers to draw more accurate conclusions about culture than larger samples consisting mostly of homogeneous countries. Therefore, careful consideration of the scope and diversity of countries included in the study is important. For reference, research in international business shows that conclusions about the influence of cultural dimensions on meaningful relationships also depend on effect size estimates and should probably not be drawn based on analyses of cultural scores from fewer than 7–10 countries, even when the effect sizes are quite large (Franke & Richey, 2010).

This study focuses on a cross-cultural review of leadership styles, in this case, the Face-Saver dimension of the Self-Protective Leadership style, covering samples from a larger number of countries (62 countries, using data from the GLOBE 2004 & 2007 projects). In reviewing the potential of cultural orientations as moderators, if we pay attention to the universality factor in the formation of a leadership style, this study speculates that there are some general phenomena and some alignment with certain contingency factors. For example, although a positive relationship between variables such as charismatic leadership style and effectiveness may exist across cultural backgrounds, indicating the universality of the relationship, in some cultures the relationship may be stronger than in other cultures (functional universality). In this case, the focus of the observation lies on whether the phenomenon being reviewed appears to be in line with cultural fit or cultural differences (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024). With this line of argumentation, this study is expected to provide a good starting point and background for developing hypotheses to test the conceptual model with the proposed study design.

Cultural backgrounds with high Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance may tend to value clear structures and rules (Edmondson, 1999; House & Mitchell, 1975; Offerman et al. 1994). Strong hierarchies accompanied by clear chains of command provide a sense of order and predictability, reducing anxiety about the unknown. Leaders in such cultures may be expected to enforce these rules rigidly, further reinforcing power distance. Furthermore, in high power distance cultures, individuals may be reluctant to challenge authority or propose new ideas, for fear of rejection from superiors. This reinforces the existing power structure and reduces uncertainty.

This study aims to explore whether Uncertainty Avoidance culture orientation is related to the formation of the Face-Saver of Self-Protective Leadership style and whether there is variation in the pattern of this relationship across different Power Distance cultural contexts. The findings of this study are expected to provide insight into effective leadership practices in teams or organizations with diverse cultural compositions. In response to the challenge as coined by Franke and Richey (2010), this research employed a dataset on cultural and leadership values from more than 60 countries around the world with diverse cultural backgrounds, not just derived from several homogeneous groups of countries (e.g., Western or Asian cultures). Secondly, it aimed to test the dual effects of cultural values, Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance, on the Face-Saving Leadership style, which was less pronounced in the previous studies (e.g., House et al. 2004; Chhokar et al. 2007).

METHODS

This study aims to examine the positive association between the cultural background of Uncertainty Avoidance and the formation of the Face-Saver, given the contextual factors of Power Distance cultural variation in various countries. Findings of cultural background and leadership style variation from 62 countries obtained by GLOBE Project 2004 & 2007 are used as data for the three variables used in the study, namely Uncertainty Avoidance, Face-Saver, and Power Distance variables. The GLOBE 2004 & 2007 study is a ten-year quantitative survey study of societal culture, organizational culture, and effective leadership attributes in 62 societies around the world. This project presents results based on data from 17,300 middle managers in 951 organizations in the food processing, financial services, and telecommunications industries, as well as archival measures of the country's economic prosperity and physical and psychological well-being of the cultures studied. This study seeks to redefine the scientific understanding of how culture and leadership style vary by national culture. In screening the dataset, both the cultural values data (Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance) and the leadership style data (Face-saving Leadership

style) were aggregated into group (country) level by two psychometric properties, rw_g and the Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient (ICCs), followed by a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test whether the variables were operating appropriately at the aggregate level of analysis (House et al 2004). Then the final dataset was at the aggregate level, comprising 62 country-level datasets for each variable.

The data for this study, at the aggregate level, were downloaded from the GLOBE project webpage https://globeproject.com/study_2004_2007.html#findings. The GLOBE 2004 study used the Face-Saver dimension (3-item questionnaires) of the Self-Protective Leadership construct (House et al. 2004); the practices and values dimensions (9-item questionnaires) were used for the Uncertainty Avoidance construct (House et al. 2004), and 10-item questionnaires for the Power Distance construct (House et al. 2004).

The proposed hypothesis tested in this study was "The cultural characteristic of Uncertainty Avoidance is more strongly associated with the Face-Saver dimension of self-protective leadership style in a society with a high-Power Distance culture than in a society with a low Power Distance culture". The hypothesis suggests a moderating role of Power Distance on the associative relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and the Face-Saver dimension of the Self-Protective Leadership Style.

For hypothesis testing, the study employed a multivariate analysis that elaborated the moderating role of the regression technique (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). If the test results show a moderating role for Power Distance, then a Simple Slope analysis technique (Cohen et al. 2003) was used to observe the moderating role of Power Distance on the associative relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-Saver. To further test the role of Power Distance as a Pure Moderator, Antecedent, or Homologizer Moderator, a series of regression tests were conducted using Power Distance as an Antecedent and as a Moderator (Sharma, Durand, & Gur-Ari, 1981).

In general, this study started with a theoretical review of the dual impacts, the beneficial and detrimental effects, of the Self-Protective Leadership style in organizations, which also showed that Uncertainty Avoidance culture could be associated with the Face-Saver dimension of the Self-Protective Leadership Style construct. On the other hand, the organization's Power Distance setting may strengthen the association between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-Saver. GLOBE's Cultural and Leadership Data was used as a database to test the hypothesis to elaborate on the alleged moderation model between uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and Face-saving. A multivariate regression analysis was used to test the moderation model. The overall flow of the research can be seen in Figure 1.

RESULTS

All raw data on Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Face-saver were downloaded from the GLOBE Project. Before being used in the analysis stage, they were tested for data normality. The Shapiro-Wilk Test was conducted to assess whether the small dataset (out of 62 countries) followed a normal distribution (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). The raw data, at the aggregate level, for the three variables (Table 1) showed that they were not normally distributed, as indicated by the Shapiro-Wilk test, (Face-saver, $W = 0.933$, $p < 0.01$; Uncertainty Avoidance, $W = 0.955$, $p < 0.05$, and Power Distance, $W = 0.927$, $p < 0.01$).

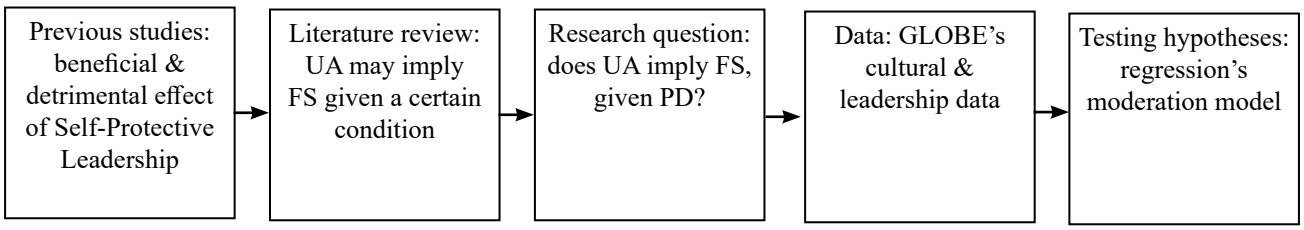

Figure 1. Flow of Research

Thus, to test the hypothesis, the data for the three variables were transformed to be normal. In this case, a two-step approach was used to transform the continuous variables to normal (Templeton, 2011). In this data transformation technique, the first step involved transforming the variable into a percentile rank, which would result in uniformly distributed probabilities, followed by the second step, which applied the inverse-normal transformation to the results of the first step to form a variable consisting of normally distributed z-scores. After the transformation, upon the completion of a Shapiro-Wilk test, the data for the three variables (N for each variable = 62) showed normally distributed (Face-saver, W = 0.980, p > 0.05; Uncertainty Avoidance, W = 0.980, p > 0.05, and Power Distance, W = 0.980, p > 0.05), then the analysis was ready based on the normalized data (Table 2).

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and zero-order correlation coefficients for all variables. Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance did not have a significant correlation (r = 0.084, n.s), indicating that both variables were, possibly, exogenous variables that did not correlate with each other.

By employing a centred dataset of the exogenous variables (Cohen et al. 2003), the suspected moderating role of Power Distance was tested. The research findings showed that the Uncertainty Avoidance cultural value had a positive relationship with the formation of a Face-saver, whereas the Power Distance contextual factor did not influence the relationship pattern between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-saver (t = 1.078, p > 0.05) (Table 4a & Table 4b).

To evaluate whether Power Distance was truly a moderator (or not), this study further assessed it based on its interaction with Uncertainty Avoidance (in this case the cross-product UA x PD) and its relation with the criterion variable, Face-saver (Sharma et al. 1981; Allison et al. 1992; Namazi & Namazi, 2016; Memon et al. 2019). In terms of its interaction with the predictor variable, Uncertainty Avoidance, Table 4b showed that there was no interaction between Uncertainty and Power Distance, as it was predicted to be associated with the formation of Face-saver orientation (t = 1.078, p > 0.05).

In this case, based on the perspective of Sharma et al (1981), there were two possibilities about the role of Power Distance in the associative relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and Face-saver, namely as a predictor (as Uncertainty Avoidance) or as a Homologizer Moderator. Specifically, to elaborate on the role of Power Distance, two equations were employed to test it, namely:

$$\text{Face-saver} = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}\text{UA} + \beta_{12}\text{PD} + e \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Face-saver} = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}\text{UA} + \beta_{22}\text{PD} + \beta_{23}\text{UA*PD} + e \quad (2)$$

If (1) β_{12} in β_{12}PD is significant and β_{23} in β_{23}UA*PD is not significant, then PD is an antecedent or predictor variable. Whereas if (2) β_{12} in β_{12}PD is not significant and β_{23} in β_{23}UA*PD is significant, then PD is a pure moderator. Furthermore, suppose (3) β_{12} in β_{12}PD is not significant and β_{23} in β_{23}UA*PD is also not significant. In that case, PD is a homologizer moderator (in this case, it can be continued to the Simple Slope Analysis stage to test the moderating effect). Finally, if (4) β_{12} in β_{12}PD is significant and β_{23} in β_{23}UA*PD is significant, then PD is a quasi-moderator (Sharma et al. 1981).

In summary, the typology of variables that determine the form and/or magnitude of the relationship between predictor variables and criterion variables (known as specification variables), following Sharma et al. (1981), can be developed using two dimensions. The first dimension is based on the relationship with the criterion variable, namely, whether the specification variable is related to the criterion variable or not. The second dimension is whether the specification variable interacts with the predictor variable or not. The typology of specification variables is presented in Table 5.

Table 1. Normality Test on Raw Data

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Face-Saver	.933	62	.002
Uncertainty Avoidance	.955	62	.023
Power Distance	.927	62	.001

Table 2. Normalized Data

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Face-Saver	.980	62	.393
Uncertainty Avoidance	.980	62	.395
Power Distance	.980	62	.397

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson's Correlations[a]

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Uncertainty Avoidance	Power Distance	Face-Saver
Uncertainty Avoidance	4.6450	0.64264	-		
Power Distance	2.7940	0.42148	0.084	-	
Face-Saver	2.9743	0.60053	0.670**	0.311*	-

[a]N = 62 countries *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01

Table 4a. R Square Change

Predictors	R	R Square	Change Statistics		
			R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
Model 1: (Constant), Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance	0.717	0.515	0.515	31.281	0.000
Model 2: (Constant), Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, UA x PD	0.724	0.524	0.010	1.161	0.286

Table 4b. The moderating role of power distance in the uncertainty avoidance and face-saver relationship

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
Model 1:					
(Constant)	2.974	.054		55.053	.000
Uncertainty Avoidance	.389	.055	.649	7.126	.000
Power Distance	.154	.055	.257	2.826	.006
Model 2:					
(Constant)	2.969	.054		54.809	.000
Uncertainty Avoidance	.377	.056	.628	6.751	.000
Power Distance	.166	.056	.277	2.988	.004
Uncertainty Avoidance x Power Distance	.064	.059	.101	1.078	.286

Table 5. Typology of Specification Variables (Sharma et al., 1981)

	Related to Criterion and/or Predictor	Not Related to Criterion and Predictor
No Interaction with Predictor	Intervening, Exogenous, Antecedent, Suppressor, Predictor	Moderator (Homologizer)
Interaction with Predictor	Quasi Moderator	Pure Moderator

The findings in Table 4a, Table 4b, and referring to the typology of specification variables (Table 5) showed that Power Distance had an associative relationship with Face-saver ($t = 2.826$, $p < 0.01$), and the interaction of Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance had no associative relationship with Face-saver ($t = 1.078$, $p > 0.05$). This showed that Power Distance acted as a predictor variable for Face-saver.

Further, the role of Power Distance as a predictor of Face-Saver was elaborated through the results of sequential regression analysis (Table 6a & Table 6b). In this case, in the analysis procedure, the Face-Saver variable was initially regressed against Uncertainty Avoidance, followed by Power Distance. The results of sequential regression showed that the regression of Face-Safer against Uncertainty Avoidance had an R Square of 0.449 (sig F Change < 0.01), and the additional predictor Power Distance produced an R Square of 0.515 (sig F Change < 0.01).

Table 6a. R Square Change

Predictors	R	R Square	Change Statistics		
			R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
Model 1: (Constant), Uncertainty Avoidance	0.670	0.449	0.449	48.883	0.000
Model 2: (Constant), Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance	0.717	0.515	0.066	7.987	0.006

Table 6b. Sequential regression to predict the role of Power Distance

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
Model 1:					
(Constant)	.065	.420		.155	.877
Uncertainty Avoidance	.626	.090	.670	6.992	.000
Model 2:					
(Constant)	-.866	.516		-1.677	.099
Uncertainty Avoidance	.606	.085	.649	7.126	.000
Power Distance	.367	.130	.257	2.826	.006

This finding indicated the possibility of trickiness in effective leadership practices, which could be dominated by the Face-Saver orientation when the organization was in a situation with high Uncertainty Avoidance as well as high Power Distance; uniquely, in this case, this study speculated, that if there was an engineering of the organizational structure that could develop a situation with low Power Distance, it would be able to reduce the presence of Face-saver situation.

While this study coined a hypothesis that encourages the contingency phenomenon, as discussed earlier, the research findings showed that Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance might both independently influence Face-Saving behavior. Cultures high in Uncertainty Avoidance tend to emphasize harmony and conflict avoidance, leading to face-saving strategies. Similarly, cultures high in Power Distance may emphasize hierarchical structures and respect for authority, which may lead to Face-Saving behavior to avoid offending superiors or disrupting social order. Nevertheless, the combined effects of these two dimensions may be more complex.

High power distance may increase the Face-saving tendencies associated with high Uncertainty Avoidance, or a synergistic effect may occur. In these cultures, individuals may feel more pressure to maintain harmony and avoid conflict with authority figures. In some cases, a counterbalancing effect may happen. High Power Distance can counteract the Face-saving tendencies associated with high Uncertainty Avoidance. For example, in cultures with high Power Distance but low Uncertainty Avoidance, individuals may feel free to express their opinions and challenge authority, even at the risk of feeling socially uncomfortable. This flow of argument indicates that Power Distance orientation may act as a predictor that affects the formation of Face-Saving behavior.

Managerial Implications

There are several possible effects of power distance orientation on employee cooperation, the nature of work, organizational communication, decision-making, and its control process, respect for senior workers, management advancement, and organizational structure (House et al. 2004). It is implied by the research findings that employees in a high separation of control structure, with the existence of power distance orientation, are less interested in making their own choices and are satisfied with the decisions made by superiors, as it was affected by the higher face-saving attitudes of the superiors, which then the employees will follow rules passively as a guide for carrying out their work. The research findings also indirectly confirmed the work of House et al. (2004), saying that high Power Distance orientation might produce limited decision-making by giving little room for negotiation and flexibility for subordinates. Communication

occurs vertically downward, with minimal or even no horizontal communication. Usually, in such situations, there is a difference in power in the communication flow in the organization. A wide communication gap occurs between superiors and their subordinates because it is difficult for subordinates to express their views. The presentation of high power distance gives superiors broad authority and influence over their subordinates.

Further, in a hierarchical organizational culture, such as those high in Power Distance, decisions are usually made by a select group of people who have authority. Assistance is facilitated by reduced resistance among subordinates, resulting in expedited decision-making and implementation in vertically structured organizational hierarchies. However, due to a lack of feedback from lower-level employees and inadequate communication and information sharing, lower decision quality tends to occur in organizations oriented toward high power distance. Organizations with high control tend to engage in unethical behavior, including face-saving activities by superiors (House et al. 2004). In vertically structured organizations, superiors tend to engage in micromanagement, which causes even minor decisions to escalate to the highest levels. As a result, senior executives inevitably become involved in the organization's routine decision-making orientation; Uncertainty Avoidance values thus came into play in such situations. In line with the results of the study, it was shown that within both circumstances, high in Uncertainty Avoidance and high in Power Distance, they would promote a Face-Saver Leadership style, a situation that senior executives might face.

In the theoretical perspective, based on the findings, it was refuted that the influence of Uncertainty Avoidance cultural value on Face-Saver Leadership style might vary depending on the context of the situation, including the perception of Power Distance cultural value, as indicated by the perspective of the House and Mitchell's Path-Goal Theory of Leadership. The theory claimed that effective leaders could adjust their leadership style to the context of the situation (e.g., the perception of Power Distance). On the contrary, the Power Distance cultural value might directly affect the emergence of the Face-Saver Leadership style, as the research revealed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

With the discussion of the influence of power distance orientation, this study proposed ways to manage the issue of power distance in organizations, namely by engineering the structure by creating flatter hierarchies and supporting the formation of cross-functional teams. Flattening the organizational structure might reduce the effect of Power Distance orientation and increase collaboration. On the other hand, cross-functional teams aimed to break down silos and promote knowledge sharing. The results of this study indicated that reducing Power Distance orientation might decrease the formation of Face-saver characteristics in organizations.

Recommendations

For future research, it was necessary to test whether the existence of a flatter structure and cross-functional teams, or a less oriented Power Distance, could reduce the formation of Face-saving practices in organizations. At least this assertion complemented the current findings of several literatures which showed that cultural orientation engineering might influence decisions in business processes (Boscari et al. 2018; Kroumova & Mittal, 2023), governance in public sector organizations (Omar et al. 2015; Mbau & Gilson, 2018), strategic decisions (Sniazhko, 2019), entrepreneurial intention (Tetteh et al. 2024), strengthening organizational identification (Lee & Park, 2015) and innovation (Prim et al. 2017; Lopes & Serrasqueiro, 2017; Tian et al. 2022; Jan et al. 2024).

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