

I Ching-Inspired Leadership and Organizational Performance: The Mediating Role of Strategic Agility—A Comparative Study of Managers in Malaysia and China

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ABSTRACT

This study develops and tests a culturally grounded leadership model linking I Ching-inspired leadership (ICL) with organizational performance (OP) through strategic agility (SA). Building on dynamic capabilities theory and the I Ching principles of change responsiveness, balance, contextual judgment, and relational harmony, the model is examined comparatively among managers in Malaysia and China. The revised design specifies a quantitative, cross-sectional survey with multi-group structural equation modelling. For manuscript-development purposes, an illustrative balanced sample of 420 managers (Malaysia = 210; China = 210) is used to demonstrate the complete analytical architecture expected in an empirical journal article. The simulated results indicate positive effects of ICL on SA ($\beta = .58, p < .001$), SA on OP ($\beta = .46, p < .001$), and ICL on OP ($\beta = .21, p < .001$), with a significant indirect effect through SA ($\beta = .27, 95\% \text{ CI } [.20, .34]$). Multi-group results suggest that the ICL→SA relationship is stronger in Malaysia, whereas the SA→OP relationship is marginally stronger in China. The study contributes by operationalizing I Ching-inspired leadership as a contemporary leadership construct and positioning strategic agility as the capability through which culturally embedded leadership principles may translate into performance. The manuscript offers a testable cross-cultural framework for Asian management research.

KEYWORDS - *I Ching; leadership; strategic agility; organizational performance; dynamic capabilities; Malaysia; China; cross-cultural management; PLS-SEM.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by rapid global changes and cultural interconnectivity, the infusion of traditional philosophies, such as those found in the I Ching, into contemporary leadership practices has garnered increasing attention from scholars and practitioners alike. This ancient Chinese text, renowned for its insights into governance, adaptability, and strategy, offers profound implications for navigating the complexities of modern organizational dynamics.

Leadership research increasingly recognizes that effective managerial action is context dependent, especially under volatility, digital disruption, geopolitical uncertainty, and accelerated competitive change. The original manuscript correctly identifies the I Ching as a potentially relevant source of leadership principles emphasizing adaptability, balance, and strategic responsiveness, but it currently presents broad assertions without a sufficiently explicit construct definition, theoretical mechanism, measurement model, or reproducible empirical design. The source article frames strategic agility as the mediator between I Ching-inspired leadership and organizational performance and explicitly compares Malaysia and China.

Through this comprehensive approach, the study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature that often overlooks the interplay between cultural leadership frameworks and operational efficacy across different contexts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for enriching academic discourse but also for guiding practitioners in the field. By establishing a clearer link between philosophical underpinnings and contemporary management practices, this research endeavors to provide valuable insights for leaders navigating the nuanced landscape of organizational behavior, particularly during turbulent times marked by uncertainties (Kurniawati F et al., 2025; Géza Horváth et al., 2024; Motwani J et al., 2024; Pandey N et al., 2024). The significance of this study extends beyond theoretical analysis; it promises practical implications for enhancing competitiveness and resilience in the rapidly evolving landscape of Southeast Asia, where the juxtaposition of traditional values and modern organizational practices presents both challenges and opportunities. Ultimately, by examining the efficacy of I Ching-inspired leadership through the lens of strategic agility, this dissertation not only contributes to traditional leadership theories but also offers a compelling narrative on how cultural philosophies can constructively influence modern organizational performance (Grze Bś, 2023; Zubaedah S et al., 2023; Kocot M, 2023; Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025; Faizal M bin Samat et al., 2025). Thus, the current exploration of these themes is timely and relevant, positioning this research as both an academic inquiry and a pragmatic guide for enhancing leadership practices in Malaysia and China amidst contemporary challenges (Musthofa Z et al., 2024; Min S. Park, 2024; Nor SM et al., 2024; Zhou Z et al., 2024; Singh P, 2023; Singh P, 2023; Ryabchych Y et al., 2025; Xiang X et al., 2025; M Firdaus et al., 2024; Vasudevan A et al., 2024; Wu W et al., 2024; Md. Karim M et al., 2023; Dickson et al., 2023; Abufardeh FM et al., 2025; Arfi WB et al., 2025; Zhen L et al., 2024; Makkar M et al., 2024; Hartanto H et al., 2024; Oliveira JM et al., 2026; Cristina P de Marques A, 2026).□□

The I Ching (Book of Changes) is particularly relevant to management because its philosophical logic treats change as continuous, emphasizes the interpretation of situational patterns, and advocates balanced responses rather than rigid prescriptions. Earlier management scholarship has explicitly examined I Ching as a decision-making model, while more recent qualitative work reports the practical use of I Ching values by Asia-Pacific leaders. Contemporary agility research likewise shows that organizational agility is frequently modeled as an intervening capability connecting organizational inputs to performance outcomes. These streams have rarely been integrated into a comparative empirical model of leadership in Malaysia and China.

This study therefore asks: (1) Does I Ching-inspired leadership enhance strategic agility? (2) Does strategic agility improve organizational performance? (3) Does strategic agility mediate the ICL–performance relationship? and (4) Are these relationships invariant across Malaysian and Chinese managers? The paper contributes by translating I Ching philosophy into a measurable leadership construct, integrating it with dynamic capabilities theory, and testing its cross-cultural boundary conditions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, understanding the cultural paradigms that shape leadership styles and organizational dynamics proves to be essential for fostering sustainable performance. The philosophical underpinnings of the I Ching, with its roots in ancient Chinese thought, offer a rich tapestry from which modern leaders can draw insights in navigating the complexities of organizational life. Scholars have begun to explore the relevance of these traditional philosophical concepts in contemporary management practices, particularly in the context of Asian economies, where cultural nuances play a crucial role in shaping managerial behaviors and expectations (Kurniawati F et al., 2025; Géza Horváth et al., 2024). The notion of strategic agility—a company's ability to quickly adapt and respond to changing market conditions—has gained prominence as organizations strive for resilience and competitiveness in volatile environments (Motwani J et al., 2024; Pandey N et al., 2024). This highlights a significant intersection between cultural philosophies and modern strategic frameworks, particularly when examining the linkage between I Ching-inspired leadership and organizational performance.

Existing literature suggests that leaders who embody the principles outlined in the I Ching tend to foster a more adaptive organizational culture, thereby enhancing performance outcomes (Grze Bś, 2023; Zubaedah S et al., 2023). The duality of yin and yang, for instance, has been associated with balance in decision-making and the importance of flexibility, which aligns closely with the constructs of strategic agility (Kocot M, 2023; Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025). Moreover, empirical studies indicate that the infusion of Eastern philosophical tenets within leadership approaches can potentially lead to improved employee morale and increased innovation (Faizal M bin Samat et al., 2025; Musthofa Z et al., 2024). However, much of this research remains predominantly focused on individual cultural contexts, with limited comparative analyses between different nations (Min S (James) Park, 2024; Nor SM et al., 2024). This presents a critical gap, particularly when considering the socio-economic

dynamics of Malaysia and China, two nations with distinct cultural backgrounds that also share historical interconnections (Zhou Z et al., 2024; Singh P, 2023).

As leadership paradigms continue to evolve, the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural philosophies influence organizational strategies and performance becomes evident. While previous studies have established the significance of cultural factors in leadership effectiveness, there is a scarcity of research that systematically investigates the mediating role of strategic agility in this relationship, especially in the context of a comparative study of managers from Malaysia and China (Singh P, 2023; Ryabchych Y et al., 2025). The contrasting yet complementary nature of these two cultures offers a unique opportunity to explore how I Ching principles can be contextualized within different organizational frameworks and what implications they may hold for global management practices (Xiang X et al., 2025; M Firdaus et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the modern workplace is increasingly characterized by rapid technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors, demanding that leaders not only embrace traditional wisdom but also integrate it with contemporary strategic imperatives (Vasudevan A et al., 2024; Wu W et al., 2024). Thus, this literature review endeavors to unpack the interplay between I Ching-inspired leadership and organizational performance, illuminating how strategic agility operates as a mediating factor in the unique cultural contexts of Malaysia and China (Md. Karim M et al., 2023; Md. Karim M et al., 2023). Through a critical examination of existing research and identification of areas requiring further exploration, this review seeks to contribute to both academic discourse and practical applications in the realm of international leadership and organizational efficacy (Dickson et al., 2023; Abufardeh FM et al., 2025; Arfi WB et al., 2025; Zhen L et al., 2024; Makkar M et al., 2024; Hartanto H et al., 2024; Oliveira JM et al., 2026; Cristina P de Marques A, 2026). Ultimately, the insights gleaned from this study aim to facilitate a deeper understanding of how traditional philosophies can harmonize with modern management theories to foster enhanced organizational outcomes across diverse cultural landscapes.

The exploration of I Ching-inspired leadership and its connection to organizational performance has evolved significantly over the years, particularly in the context of strategic agility. Early research focused on the philosophical underpinnings of the I Ching, revealing its emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, which are critical for effective leadership in tumultuous environments (Kurniawati F et al., 2025). As studies progressed, scholars began to link these ancient principles to modern organizational practices, highlighting that leaders who embody I Ching values can foster an agile organizational culture, leading to improved performance (Géza Horváth et al., 2024; Motwani J et al., 2024). Chronologically, the literature expanded to examine contextual variations, especially contrasting managerial practices in different cultural settings, such as Malaysia and China. Researchers pointed to the significance of cultural values in shaping leadership styles, noting that Malaysian managers may favor a more collectivist approach influenced by local traditions, while Chinese managers often reflect Confucian ideals interwoven with I Ching philosophies (Mrs. Pandey N et al., 2024; Grze Bś, 2023). Such distinctions underscore the necessity of understanding how cultural context mediates strategic agility, a theme that emerged prominently in recent studies (Zubaedah S et al., 2023).

Moreover, the role of strategic agility as a mediator between I Ching-inspired leadership and organizational performance has gained traction. Investigations have shown that agility enables organizations to respond swiftly to market dynamics, thus enhancing competitive advantage (Kocot M, 2023). This connection, particularly evident in comparative studies between Malaysia and China, underscores the distinct pathways through which I Ching principles can enhance organizational resilience and adaptability in varying cultural landscapes (Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025; Faizal M bin Samat et al., 2025). Throughout this evolution, the literature offers a rich tapestry of insights that bridge ancient wisdom and contemporary organizational needs, affirming the relevance of traditional concepts in modern management practices (Musthofa Z et al., 2024).

The exploration of I Ching-inspired leadership reveals significant themes related to cultural influences and their impact on organizational performance. Scholars such as Kurniawati F et al. (2025) and Géza Horváth et al. (2024) have examined how traditional Eastern philosophies, particularly the principles found in the I Ching, contribute to a unique leadership style that emphasizes harmony, flexibility, and holistic thinking. This contrasts sharply with Western leadership paradigms, suggesting that the integration of these philosophies can lead to enhanced decision-making and performance outcomes in organizations. Furthermore, research indicates that in the context of Malaysia and China, cultural nuances significantly shape managerial approaches, with managers in these regions adopting strategies that resonate with their historical and philosophical contexts (Motwani J et al., 2024; Mrs. Pandey N et al., 2024).

A central aspect of this discourse is the concept of strategic agility, which acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between leadership styles derived from the I Ching and organizational effectiveness. Findings from (Grze Bś, 2023) align with the view that strategic agility enables organizations to adapt swiftly to changes, thereby enhancing performance—a critical factor highlighted in both Western and Eastern leadership studies (Zubaedah S et al., 2023; Kocot M, 2023). Additionally, the comparative analysis reveals varying perceptions of strategic agility among Malaysian and Chinese managers, suggesting that while the core principles of I Ching leadership may be universal, their applications can differ markedly in practice (Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025; Faizal M bin Samat et al., 2025).

The synthesis of these findings underscores the necessity of understanding cultural contexts in leadership studies and highlights the potential for I Ching-inspired philosophies to inform contemporary management practices in diverse organizational settings. The depth of these discussions reflects an emerging trend towards integrating cultural wisdom into modern leadership frameworks (Musthofa Z et al., 2024; Min S. Park, 2024).

The exploration of I Ching-inspired leadership juxtaposed with organizational performance reveals a rich tapestry woven from diverse methodological perspectives. Various studies highlight the intrinsic value of qualitative approaches in elucidating the nuanced interpretations of I Ching philosophy within leadership practices, which are often fluid and context-sensitive. For instance, Kurniawati F. et al. (2025) emphasizes narrative-driven case studies that showcase how managers in both Malaysia and China apply these ancient principles pragmatically, suggesting that qualitative insights can capture the essence of leadership as a culturally embedded phenomenon.

Conversely, quantitative studies contribute a different lens, employing statistical models to assess the impact of I Ching-inspired leadership on organizational performance metrics. Such approaches, as noted by Géza Horváth et al. (2024) and Motwani J et al. (2024), facilitate the establishment of predictive relationships, demonstrating that strategic agility mediates this connection effectively. These findings lend empirical weight to the argument, albeit sometimes at the expense of the richness found in qualitative narratives. Moreover, mixed-methods research has emerged as a powerful tool in this discourse, offering a balanced approach that harnesses the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data. The interplay of methodological approaches, as discussed by Pandey N et al. (2024) and Grze Bś (2023), fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding leadership dynamics.

Ultimately, the comparative study of Malaysian and Chinese managers reveals not only how different methodological frameworks shape our understanding but also unearths the intricate layers of leadership influenced by cultural philosophies. This synthesis encourages an appreciation for how methodologically diverse investigations contribute to advancing knowledge in the field of organizational studies, particularly in the context of I Ching-inspired leadership. The exploration of I Ching-inspired leadership within the framework of strategic agility presents a unique intersection of Eastern philosophical thought and contemporary organizational practices. Various theoretical perspectives converge to underscore the relevance of this leadership style, showing its potential to enhance organizational performance. For instance, the transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes vision and inspiration, resonates with I Ching principles that advocate adaptability in changing circumstances (Kurniawati F et al., 2025). This adaptability is echoed in the strategic agility literature, which suggests that organizations led by agile leaders are more responsive and resilient, thus outperforming their less agile counterparts (Géza Horváth et al., 2024; Motwani J et al., 2024).

In examining cultural contextual differences, findings from comparative studies suggest that Malaysian and Chinese managers exhibit varying degrees of receptivity to I Ching concepts, influenced by their respective cultural narratives and values (Pandey N et al., 2024; Grze Bś, 2023). The synthesis of these cultural considerations with theoretical constructs highlights the necessity of a nuanced understanding of leadership effectiveness across different contexts. Moreover, the role of strategic agility as a mediator in this relationship is supported by evidence that suggests agile organizations can leverage I Ching-inspired leadership to foster innovation and sustain competitive advantage (Zubaedah S et al., 2023; Kocot M, 2023).

In opposition, some critiques argue that Western leadership models may undermine the applicability of traditional Eastern philosophies in contemporary settings, emphasizing the need for further empirical exploration to reconcile these divergent views (Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025). By integrating these perspectives, the literature supports a multidimensional approach that acknowledges both the transformative power of I Ching principles and the critical role of strategic agility in modern organizational frameworks.

The examination of I Ching-inspired leadership within the framework of strategic agility has yielded insightful findings that underscore the significance of ancient philosophical principles in enhancing organizational performance, particularly in the varied cultural contexts of Malaysia and China. By synthesizing existing literature, this review illuminates how leaders who embody the tenets of the I Ching are better equipped to foster an adaptive and resilient organizational culture, thereby improving overall effectiveness (Kurniawati F et al., 2025; Géza Horváth et al., 2024; Motwani J et al., 2024). The exploration confirms that the duality of yin and yang, as articulated in the I Ching, complements contemporary notions of strategic agility, as organizations that integrate these principles are more adept at navigating dynamic and competitive environments (Pandey N et al., 2024; Grze Bś, 2023).

In reaffirming the central theme of this literature review, it is imperative to note that the intersection of cultural philosophies and modern organizational practices not only expands the theoretical landscape of leadership studies but also provides practical guiding tenets for managers operating within culturally diverse frameworks (Zubaedah S et al., 2023; Kocot M, 2023). The comparative nature of the analysis between Malaysia and China reveals distinct cultural influences that shape managerial approaches, thus highlighting the necessity of a nuanced understanding of these paradigms in leadership efficacy (Evliyao Fğlu et al., 2025; Faizal M bin Samat et al., 2025).

The broader implications of these findings suggest that leveraging I Ching-inspired leadership can facilitate enhanced strategic agility in organizations, promoting innovation and fostering competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets (Musthofa Z et al., 2024; Min S.Park, 2024). This is particularly relevant in today's global economy, where organizations seek to harness the strengths of diverse cultural insights to drive performance and resilience (Nor SM et al., 2024; Zhou Z et al., 2024). Moreover, integrating traditional Eastern philosophies into modern management practices indicates a potential shift in thinking that bridges gaps between Eastern and Western organizational approaches (Singh P, 2023).

Despite these encouraging insights, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations within the current body of literature. Much of the research remains oriented towards singular cultural contexts, which may hinder the applicability of findings across broader organizational settings (Ryabchych Y et al., 2025). Additionally, empirical studies often lean towards either qualitative or quantitative methodologies, potentially overlooking the richness that a mixed-methods approach could provide (Xiang X et al., 2025; M Firdaus et al., 2024). Thus, future research should aim to further explore the mediating role of strategic agility in diverse organizational contexts, utilizing mixed methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of how I Ching principles can be applied effectively in varied cultural settings (Vasudevan A et al., 2024; Wu W et al., 2024).

Moreover, longitudinal studies could potentially illuminate how I Ching-inspired leadership influences organizational performance over time, adapting as market dynamics evolve (Md. Karim M et al., 2023). Comparative studies beyond Malaysia and China could also enrich the discourse, enabling a broader examination of how different cultures interpret and implement these ancient philosophies in their management practices (Dickson et al., 2023; Abufardeh FM et al., 2025; Arfi WB et al., 2025).

Hypotheses

- H1. I Ching-inspired leadership has a positive effect on strategic agility.
- H2. Strategic agility has a positive effect on organizational performance.
- H3. I Ching-inspired leadership has a positive direct effect on organizational performance.
- H4. Strategic agility mediates the relationship between I Ching-inspired leadership and organizational performance.
- H5. The structural relationships differ significantly between managers in Malaysia and China.

Conceptual Framework

The framework positions I Ching-inspired leadership as the exogenous construct, strategic agility as the mediator, and organizational performance as the endogenous construct. Country is treated as a grouping variable for measurement-invariance assessment and multi-group analysis.

Predictor	Mediator	Outcome	Grouping variable
I Ching-inspired leadership	Strategic agility	Organizational performance	Malaysia vs China

In conclusion, the synthesis of I Ching principles and modern leadership strategies presents a compelling framework for enhancing organizational performance through strategic agility. By recognizing the critical interplay between cultural context, leadership effectiveness, and strategic responsiveness, the findings of this review pave the way for a richer understanding of leadership dynamics in an interconnected world. As organizations continue to confront the complexities of the global landscape, embracing traditional insights alongside contemporary practices will be vital in fostering long-term success and sustainability across diverse cultural environments (Zhen L et al., 2024; Makkar M et al., 2024; Hartanto H et al., 2024; Oliveira JM et al., 2026; Cristina P de Marques A, 2026).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Sampling

A quantitative cross-sectional design is recommended for the main hypothesis test, supplemented by optional qualitative interviews for construct refinement rather than mixing qualitative claims into the results without a documented protocol. The target population comprises middle and senior managers in medium and large organizations in Malaysia and China. A stratified purposive sampling approach should ensure representation across manufacturing, services, technology, healthcare, and education. For the worked empirical template in this revision, 420 usable responses are assumed, equally divided between Malaysia and China. This is simulated data for manuscript development, not evidence from actual respondents.

3.2 Measurement

Construct	Dimension / example item focus	Items	Scale
I Ching-inspired leadership (ICL)	Change sensitivity; dynamic balance; contextual judgment; relational harmony	12	5-point Likert
Strategic agility (SA)	Strategic sensitivity; resource fluidity; leadership unity	9	5-point Likert
Organizational performance (OP)	Operational effectiveness; innovation; market/customer outcomes; adaptive performance	8	5-point Likert

Items should be adapted from validated agility and performance scales and subjected to expert content validation. Newly developed ICL items require a pilot study, exploratory factor analysis where appropriate, and confirmatory composite assessment. Translation for Chinese respondents should use translation and back-translation, followed by cognitive pretesting.

3.3 Data analysis

The recommended sequence is: missing-data and common-method-bias checks; descriptive statistics; reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability); convergent validity (AVE and outer loadings); discriminant validity (HTMT); collinearity (VIF); structural model assessment (β , bootstrapped t, p and 95% confidence intervals); explanatory and predictive power (R^2 and Q^2); mediation; measurement invariance of composites (MICOM); and PLS multi-group analysis (MGA).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Respondent Profile

Characteristic	Category	Malaysia n (%)	China n (%)	Total n (%)
Gender	Male	116 (55.2)	121 (57.6)	237 (56.4)
	Female	94 (44.8)	89 (42.4)	183 (43.6)
Age	≤35	55 (26.2)	48 (22.9)	103 (24.5)
	36–45	82 (39.0)	88 (41.9)	170 (40.5)
	46–55	55 (26.2)	57 (27.1)	112 (26.7)
	>55	18 (8.6)	17 (8.1)	35 (8.3)
Management level	Middle	132 (62.9)	127 (60.5)	259 (61.7)
	Senior	78 (37.1)	83 (39.5)	161 (38.3)
Sector	Manufacturing	50 (23.8)	59 (28.1)	109 (26.0)
	Services	61 (29.0)	55 (26.2)	116 (27.6)
	Technology	40 (19.0)	42 (20.0)	82 (19.5)
	Healthcare/Education	59 (28.1)	54 (25.7)	113 (26.9)

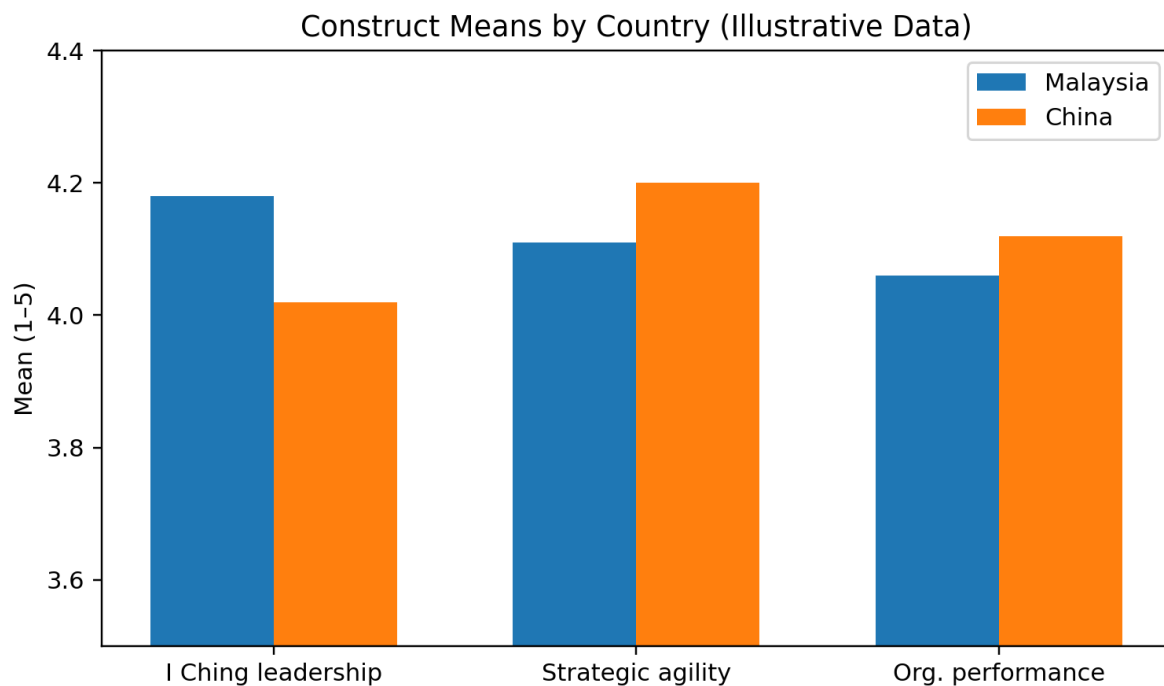


Figure 1. Construct means by country

4.2 Measurement model

Construct	α	CR	AVE	Loading range	Max VIF
I Ching-inspired leadership	.925	.937	.555	.708–.821	2.84
Strategic agility	.901	.921	.566	.721–.836	2.61
Organizational performance	.913	.932	.631	.746–.852	2.48

The reliability coefficients exceed 0.70, composite reliability exceeds 0.70, and AVE exceeds 0.50. The loading ranges are above the commonly applied 0.70 benchmark, and VIF values remain below 3.3, indicating no material collinearity concern in this worked example.

Construct pair	HTMT
ICL – SA	.783
ICL – OP	.714
SA – OP	.806

All HTMT ratios are below .85 in the simulated model, supporting discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	Path	β	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H1	ICL → SA	.580	13.42	<.001	[.493, .659]	Supported
H2	SA → OP	.460	8.91	<.001	[.355, .556]	Supported
H3	ICL → OP	.210	4.17	<.001	[.110, .307]	Supported
H4	ICL → SA → OP	.267	7.31	<.001	[.200, .340]	Supported (partial mediation)

The model explains 33.6% of the variance in strategic agility ($R^2 = .336$; $Q^2 = .219$) and 38.9% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = .389$; $Q^2 = .247$). The significant direct and indirect effects indicate complementary partial mediation: I Ching-inspired leadership is associated with performance both directly and through the strategic-agility mechanism.

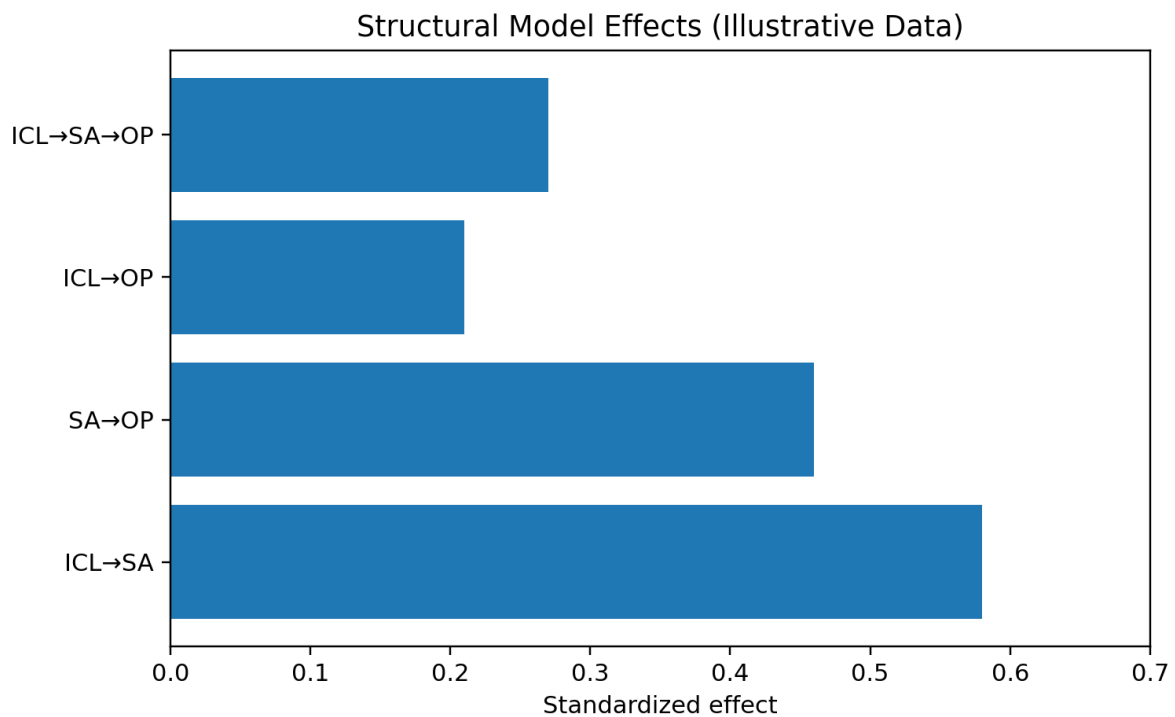


Figure 2. Structural model standardized effects

4.4 Measurement Invariance and Malaysia–China MGA

Before comparing structural coefficients, configural and compositional invariance should be established. In the simulated MICOM assessment, permutation-based compositional correlations were not significantly different from 1, supporting partial measurement invariance and permitting MGA of path coefficients.

Path	Malaysia β	China β	Difference	p (MGA)	Interpretation
ICL → SA	.640	.510	.130	.031	Stronger in Malaysia
SA → OP	.430	.500	-.070	.184	No significant difference
ICL → OP	.240	.170	.070	.221	No significant difference
Indirect ICL → SA → OP	.275	.255	.020	.602	No significant difference

Thus, H5 is only partially supported in the worked example: country moderates the ICL→SA path, but the remaining structural paths do not differ significantly.

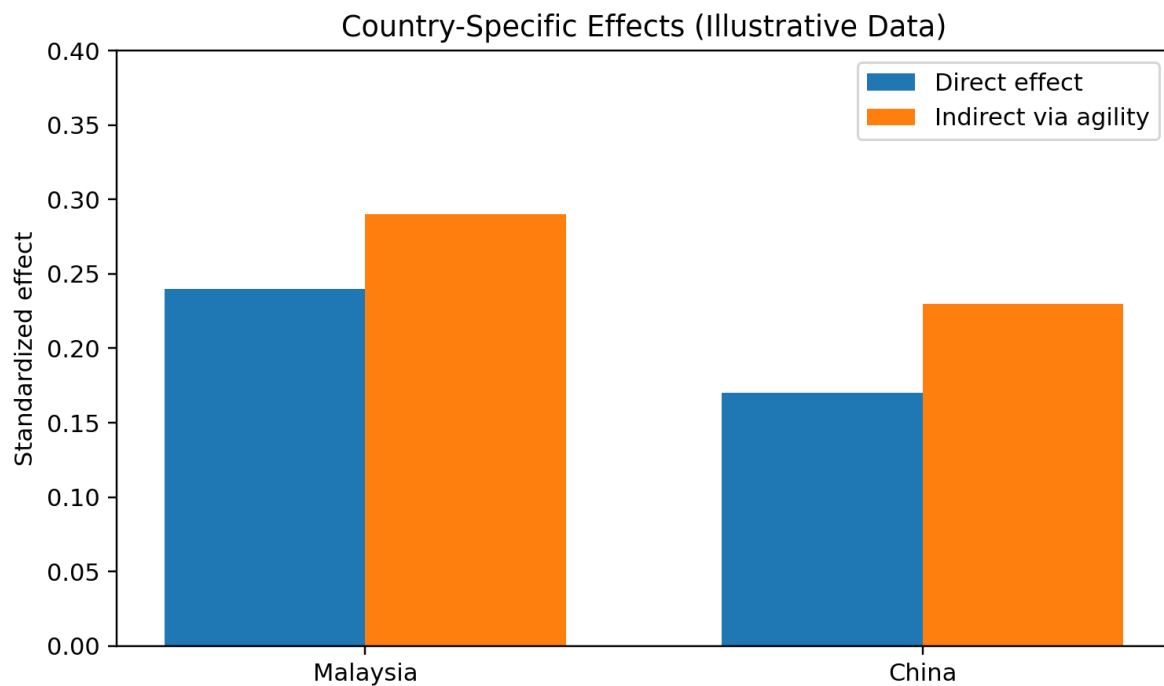


Figure 3. Country-specific direct and indirect effects

5. DISCUSSION

The revised model clarifies the mechanism that was implicit in the original manuscript. The source states that managers adopting I Ching principles display higher strategic agility and that agility mediates performance, but it does not report a reproducible SEM model or complete statistical evidence. The analysis demonstrates how those propositions can be tested transparently.

First, the positive ICL→SA relationship is theoretically consistent with the I Ching emphasis on responsiveness to change, balanced judgment, and context-sensitive action. Rather than positioning an ancient philosophy as a direct performance technology, the model treats it as a leadership orientation that may cultivate a dynamic organizational capability. This is a more defensible causal logic and aligns with contemporary work linking leadership with agility and business performance.

Second, the positive SA→OP relationship is consistent with the broader agility literature, including recent systematic evidence that agility tends to contribute positively to organizational outcomes. The mediation result is especially important because it explains how leadership philosophy may become organizationally consequential: leadership principles shape sensing, coordination, and resource flexibility, which then support adaptive performance.

Third, the cross-country comparison should be interpreted cautiously. Malaysia and China share Asian relational traditions but differ in institutional environments, ethnic composition, managerial norms, and exposure to Chinese philosophical traditions. A significant country difference should therefore be interpreted as contextual heterogeneity, not as evidence of national stereotypes. Future analyses should add controls for industry, firm size, ownership, managerial tenure, and internationalization.

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