



## Confucian ethics and human resource management in Chinese enterprises: Constructing a hrm theoretical model

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### Abstract

Against the backdrop of the globalization wave driving the reconstruction of enterprise management paradigms and sustainable governance emerging as a core issue for the development of global organizations, the cultural adaptability and ethical foundation of Human Resource Management (HRM) theories are undergoing an unprecedented in-depth reflection. The existing mainstream HRM theoretical system is rooted in the Western individualistic cultural tradition and the assumption of contractual rationality, with performance maximization as its core goal, and has constructed a management mechanism system centered on motivation and control. However, in the context of enterprises owned by Chinese communities deeply influenced by Confucian ethics, HRM practices have always been embedded in a dual framework of relational ethics and moral order, making Western mainstream theories unable to effectively explain and guide their management logic and practical effects. Taking Confucian ethics as the core theoretical foundation, this paper systematically constructs a virtue HRM theoretical model with "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" as the core dimensions through interdisciplinary conceptual integration and localized theoretical deduction, and proposes a set of context-embedded HRM theoretical frameworks adapted to the context of Chinese enterprises. This study argues that Confucian ethics should not be simply regarded as a cultural background variable in HRM research, but should become the normative foundation and core governance logic for constructing localized HRM theories. Based on the theoretical construction, this paper puts forward four testable theoretical propositions, and elaborates on the theoretical breakthroughs of this model for Chinese management research and its supplementary value to the global HRM theoretical system. This research provides a localized path to solve the adaptability problem of Western HRM theories in the Chinese context, and also offers Chinese wisdom for the ethical turn and diversified development of the global HRM theoretical system.

**Keywords:** Confucian ethics, Chinese enterprises, human resource management, virtue hrm, context embeddedness, virtue leadership

### Introduction

#### Research Background and Theoretical Motivation Development and Dilemmas of Global HRM Theories

Since the rise of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the 1980s, it has always occupied the core position in HRM research. Its core theoretical proposition is that there is a significant positive correlation between HRM practices and organizational performance, emphasizing the construction and maintenance of corporate competitive advantages through systematic and strategic human resource allocation and management (Becker & Huselid, 1998 [3]; Wright & McMahan, 1992). Among them, the High Performance Work Systems (HPWS), as the core practical carrier of SHRM theory, proposes to stimulate employees' potential and improve overall organizational performance through a series of supporting practices such as scientific talent selection, systematic training, standardized performance appraisal and differentiated incentive systems, becoming the mainstream paradigm of HRM in Western enterprises (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995) [16, 29]. After decades of development, SHRM theory and HPWS practices have achieved remarkable results in Western enterprise management. However, the three core assumptions implied behind this theoretical system have gradually exposed its limitations in cross-cultural application. First, the assumption of human beings as rational economic men, which regards employees as rational subjects pursuing the maximization of personal interests, and holds that employees' work behaviors are entirely

driven by material incentives and external control. Second, the assumption of organizations as contractual structures, which defines the relationship between enterprises and employees as a pure economic contractual relationship, emphasizing the clarity, normativeness and enforceability of contracts. Third, the assumption of management goals as performance maximization, which takes financial performance as the sole core goal of HRM, with all management practices centered on performance improvement. This theoretical framework centered on instrumental rationality constitutes the underlying logic of Western HRM theories and also becomes the core obstacle to their cross-cultural dissemination.

Against the background of the integration of economic globalization and enterprise localization, more and more studies have found that HRM theories and practices developed based on the Western context show obvious "acclimatization problems" in non-Western cultural contexts (Tsui, 2007; Farh *et al.*, 2004) [21, 46]. Some studies point out that in a collectivist cultural background, overemphasizing individual performance and material incentives will instead reduce employees' organizational identification and willingness to cooperate in teams (House *et al.*, 2004) [28], simplifying the relationship between enterprises and employees into a contractual relationship ignores the important role of non-economic factors in employees' behaviors and organizational development (Chen & Chen, 2004) [7]. This means that the development of global HRM theories urgently needs to break through the single

framework of Western culture and transform towards a direction of multicultural orientation and localized adaptation.

### Localized Characteristics and Theoretical Gaps of HRM Practices in Chinese Enterprises

As an important part of the global economic system, Chinese enterprises show distinct localized characteristics in their HRM practices, which are significantly different from those of Western enterprises. In Chinese enterprises, HRM decisions are not simply based on instrumental considerations of performance and efficiency, but always integrate multiple factors such as ethical responsibility, long-term relationships and moral reputation (Redding, 1990; Wong, 2016) <sup>[41, 53]</sup>. For example, in employee recruitment, Chinese enterprises often focus on "guanxi (relationships)" and "moral character" rather than just professional ability; in employee motivation, in addition to material rewards, more emphasis is placed on emotional care, identity recognition and long-term development; in organizational governance, attention is paid to the integration of "reason, affection and law" rather than just institutional norms and contract enforcement (Chen, 2001; Tsui *et al.*, 2007) <sup>[46]</sup>. Behind these localized practices is the thousands of years of infiltration and accumulation of Confucian culture. As the core of Chinese culture, Confucian ethics has shaped the values, behaviors and social relationship patterns of the Chinese people, and also profoundly influenced the organizational governance and HRM logic of Chinese enterprises (Tu, 1985; Cheng, 2019) <sup>[10]</sup>. However, the current research on HRM in Chinese enterprises is mostly still in the research paradigm of "Western theories + Chinese data", that is, taking Western HRM theories as the analytical framework and testing and revising them through data from Chinese enterprises, lacking the real theoretical construction based on local culture and practices (Li, 2018; Xu *et al.*, 2015). This research paradigm leads to the failure of existing studies to effectively explain the underlying logic of HRM practices in Chinese enterprises, and also makes it difficult to propose management theories and practical suggestions adapted to the context of Chinese enterprises.

Some localized studies have attempted to explore local management elements from Confucian culture, such as the proposal and verification of concepts such as paternalistic leadership and the differential mode of association (Farh & Cheng, 2015; Fei, 1998) <sup>[20, 23]</sup>, which have provided an important theoretical foundation for Chinese management research. However, most of such studies focus on a single concept or dimension, lacking systematic theoretical integration, and have not yet formed a complete localized HRM theoretical system with Confucian ethics as the core. At the same time, most existing studies regard Confucian culture as a background variable affecting HRM practices, rather than the core norm for constructing HRM theories, failing to give full play to the core role of Confucian ethics in the construction of localized theories.

The core research question of this study is: How to construct a set of context-embedded virtue HRM theoretical models adapted to the context of Chinese enterprises with Confucian ethics as the core? Specifically, it includes: How to systematically integrate the core dimensions of Confucian ethics with HRM theories? What is the theoretical framework and core connotation of the virtue HRM model

based on Confucian ethics? What testable theoretical propositions can this model put forward? What theoretical contributions does it have to Chinese management research and the development of global HRM theories?

### Literature Review

#### 1. Core Views and Limitations of Western Mainstream HRM Theories

The core contribution of SHRM theory is to elevate HRM from traditional personnel management to the corporate strategic level, emphasizing that human resources are the core resources for enterprises to obtain sustainable competitive advantages (Wright *et al.*, 1994). Becker & Huselid (1998) <sup>[3]</sup> proposed that the core of SHRM is to improve employees' skills, motivation and participation through integrated HRM practices, thereby achieving the improvement of organizational performance. As the practical embodiment of SHRM theory, HPWS usually includes a series of interrelated management practices such as strict personnel selection, extensive training and development, performance-based compensation, and a high degree of employee participation. These practices form a motivation and control mechanism for employees through synergy, and ultimately achieve performance maximization (Huselid, 1995; Ichniowski *et al.*, 1997) <sup>[29, 30]</sup>. Western scholars have carried out a large number of empirical studies on SHRM and HPWS, and most studies have confirmed the positive correlation between high performance work systems and corporate financial performance and employee performance (Combs *et al.*, 2006; Jiang *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[12, 32]</sup>. However, most of such studies are based on Western enterprise samples, and the cross-cultural applicability of their conclusions remains to be tested. More importantly, SHRM theory is centered on instrumental rationality, regarding human resources as a "tool" to achieve organizational performance, ignoring employees' emotional needs, moral demands and social attributes, as well as the profound impact of cultural context on HRM practices (Tsui, 2007; Thomas & Peterson, 2004) <sup>[45, 46]</sup>.

As mentioned above, Western mainstream HRM theories are built on three core assumptions, which also constitute their inherent theoretical limitations. First, the assumption of rational economic man simplifies employees' behavioral motives into profit maximization, ignoring non-economic motives such as employees' moral sense, sense of belonging and self-actualization. Although social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) <sup>[5]</sup>, an important theoretical foundation of Western HRM theories, emphasizes the exchange relationship between employees and enterprises, it still regards exchange as a rational behavior based on interest calculation, failing to consider the important role of emotional exchange and moral exchange in organizational relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) <sup>[15]</sup>. Second, the assumption of contractual structures defines the relationship between enterprises and employees as a formal economic contract, emphasizing the clarity and rigidity of contracts. Agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) <sup>[31]</sup>, an important support for this assumption, holds that there is a principal-agent problem between enterprise owners and employees, and strict contracts and supervision mechanisms are needed to reduce agency costs. However, in Chinese enterprises, the relationship between enterprises and employees is more characterized by "psychological

contracts" and "relational contracts", and informal relationships based on trust and morality are often more important than formal contracts (Chen & Chen, 2004; Cheng, 1995) [7, 8]. Finally, the assumption of performance maximization takes financial performance as the sole core goal of HRM, leading HRM practices to fall into the misunderstanding of "performance supremacy". This single goal orientation not only ignores the diverse goals such as employee development and corporate social responsibility, but also easily leads enterprises to adopt short-term behaviors in management practices, damaging the long-term development of the organization (Shen & Benson, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2020) [44, 52].

Cross-cultural HRM research attempts to break through the single framework of Western culture and explore the impact of cultural factors on the practices and effects of HRM. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) [26, 27] cultural dimension theory is a classic framework for cross-cultural management research. The cultural dimensions he proposed, such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity, provide an important tool for analyzing the impact of cultural differences on management practices. Based on this theory, some studies have explored the adaptability of HRM practices under different cultural dimensions. For example, in a collectivist culture, team performance incentives are more effective than individual performance incentives; in a high power distance culture, centralized HRM decisions are more common (House *et al.*, 2004; Gelfand *et al.*, 2011) [25, 28]. However, cross-cultural HRM research still has significant deficiencies. First, this research paradigm still takes Western theories as the core, regarding culture as a moderating variable affecting the application effect of Western theories, rather than the core foundation for constructing theories, failing to form localized theories based on non-Western cultures. Second, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory regards culture as a static and homogeneous variable, ignoring the dynamics and internal differences of culture, and also failing to fully capture the core connotation of non-Western cultures such as Confucian culture (Tu, 1996; Li, 2018) [49]. Third, most cross-cultural HRM research focuses on the impact of cultural differences on the forms of HRM practices, but fails to deeply explore the shaping effect of culture on the underlying logic and governance concepts of HRM theories.

## 2. Core Connotation of Confucian Ethics and Progress in Local Management Research

Originating from Confucius' ideological system, Confucian ethics has formed a complete value system and code of conduct through the development and improvement of later Confucian scholars such as Mencius and Xunzi, becoming the core of Chinese culture (Tu, 1985; Yang, 2009) [56]. As the core dimensions of Confucian ethics, "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" constitute the foundation of Chinese values and behaviors, and also become an important criterion for the organizational governance of Chinese enterprises. "Benevolence" is the core and foundation of Confucian ethics, whose basic connotation is "loving others" (The Analects of Confucius·Yan Yuan), emphasizing care, sympathy and respect for others. In organizational management, "Benevolence" is reflected in managers' moral care, emotional sympathy and humanistic care for employees, emphasizing the construction of harmonious organizational

relationships through emotional connections (Cheng, 2019 [10]; Huang, 2006). "Righteousness" is the moral criterion of Confucian ethics, referring to the legitimacy and appropriateness of behaviors, emphasizing "thinking of righteousness when seeing profit" and "putting righteousness above all else" (The Analects of Confucius·Xian Wen). In organizational management, "Righteousness" is reflected in the fairness, legitimacy and morality of decision-making, emphasizing the adherence to the principles of fairness and justice in resource allocation, performance appraisal, promotion decisions and other links (Cheng *et al.*, 2000; Fan *et al.*, 2014) [9, 19].

"Rites" are the institutional norms and codes of conduct of Confucian ethics, emphasizing "overcoming oneself and returning to the rites" (The Analects of Confucius·Yan Yuan), and maintaining social and organizational order through external institutional norms and internal moral consciousness. In organizational management, "Rites" are reflected in clear role positioning, a sound institutional system and standardized codes of conduct, emphasizing the ethical nature of institutions and employees' institutional identification (Zhou, 2006 [60]; Li, 2018). "Trustworthiness" is the moral commitment of Confucian ethics, referring to honesty and keeping promises, emphasizing "keeping one's word and acting resolutely" (The Analects of Confucius·Zilu). In organizational management, "Trustworthiness" is reflected in the mutual trust between enterprises and employees, managers and employees, and among employees, which is an important foundation for constructing organizational relationships and improving organizational efficiency (Fukuyama, 1995; Zhang *et al.*, 2021) [24, 58]. "Benevolence Righteousness Rites Trustworthiness" are not isolated dimensions, but an organic whole that is interrelated and mutually supportive. "Benevolence" is the core, providing a moral foundation for "Righteousness, Rites and Trustworthiness"; "Righteousness" is the moral criterion, providing a value orientation for the practice of "Benevolence" and the formulation of "Rites"; "Rites" are the institutional carrier, transforming the moral requirements of "Benevolence" and "Righteousness" into specific institutional norms; "Trustworthiness" is the practical result, the concrete embodiment and inevitable product of "Benevolence, Righteousness and Rites" in organizational relationships. This organic whole constitutes a complete system of Confucian ethics and also provides a core framework for constructing localized HRM theories.

In recent years, with the rise of localized management theory research, the relationship between Confucian ethics and the management of Chinese enterprises has become a research hotspot. Scholars have explored the impact of Confucian ethics on the organizational governance, leadership styles and human resource management of Chinese enterprises from different perspectives, and achieved a series of important research results. In the research on leadership styles, Farh & Cheng (2015) [20] systematically constructed the paternalistic leadership theory, defining it as "a leadership style that shows strict discipline and authority, fatherly benevolence and moral integrity in a humanistic atmosphere", and pointed out that the core connotation of paternalistic leadership is highly consistent with the "Benevolence, Righteousness and Rites" of Confucian ethics. Fan *et al.* (2014) [19] further divided paternalistic leadership into three dimensions: authoritarianism, benevolence and moral character, among

which moral leadership and benevolent leadership are directly derived from the "Benevolence" and "Righteousness" of Confucian ethics, and authoritarian leadership is inherently related to the "Rites" of Confucian ethics. In addition, some studies have put forward concepts such as virtue leadership and Confucian leadership, emphasizing the core role of managers' moral cultivation and personal charisma in the leadership process (Brown & Treviño, 2006<sup>[6]</sup>; Wu *et al.*, 2010). In the research on organizational relationships and trust, Fukuyama (1995)<sup>[24]</sup> pointed out in the book *Trust* that Chinese society under the influence of Confucian culture is a "low-trust society", but subsequent localized studies have questioned this view. Chen & Chen (2004)<sup>[7]</sup> proposed that trust in Chinese society is not universalistic trust, but particularistic trust based on the differential mode of association, and this kind of trust plays an important governance role in Chinese enterprises. Zhang *et al.* (2021)<sup>[58]</sup> pointed out in their research that "Trustworthiness" in Confucian ethics is the core foundation of organizational trust in Chinese enterprises, and organizational trust based on "Trustworthiness" can effectively reduce transaction costs and enhance organizational cohesion.

In the research on human resource management, some studies have explored the impact of Confucian ethics on specific HRM practices of Chinese enterprises such as recruitment, training, motivation and performance appraisal. For example, Cheng's (1995)<sup>[8]</sup> research found that Chinese enterprises pay attention to "both moral integrity and ability" in recruitment, among which the evaluation criteria for "moral integrity" are mainly derived from Confucian ethics; Zhou (2006)<sup>[60]</sup> pointed out that the "self-cultivation, family harmony, state governance and world peace" in Confucian ethics has shaped the employee training concept of Chinese enterprises, emphasizing the dual improvement of moral cultivation and professional ability; Wong's (2016)<sup>[53]</sup> research found that the incentive mechanisms of Chinese enterprises include not only material incentives, but also emotional incentives, identity incentives and achievement incentives based on Confucian ethics. Although the research on Confucian ethics and Chinese management has made certain progress, existing studies still have significant deficiencies and form obvious theoretical gaps. First, the problem of theoretical fragmentation is prominent. Most existing studies focus on a single dimension of Confucian ethics or a single management practice, such as exploring benevolent leadership from "Benevolence" and organizational trust from "Trustworthiness", lacking systematic integration of the core dimensions of Confucian ethics, and failing to form a complete localized HRM theoretical system with Confucian ethics as the core.

Second, the research paradigm is still backward. Some studies still stay at the descriptive analysis of "Confucian ethics + management phenomena", failing to conduct in-depth dialogue and integration between Confucian ethics and Western mainstream management theories, and also failing to construct testable theoretical propositions through rigorous theoretical deduction, leading to insufficient theoretical and scientific nature of the research. Third, there is a deviation in the positioning of Confucian ethics. Most existing studies regard Confucian ethics as a cultural background variable affecting management practices, rather than the normative foundation and core governance logic for constructing localized HRM theories, failing to give full

play to the core role of Confucian ethics in the construction of localized theories and also failing to break through the instrumental rationality framework of Western HRM theories. Fourth, there is a lack of context-embedded theoretical construction. Existing studies have failed to fully consider the specific contextual characteristics of Chinese enterprises, such as the governance structure of family enterprises, the organizational relationships of the differential mode of association, and the governance logic of the integration of reason, affection and law, leading to the disconnection between the constructed theoretical models and the actual practices of Chinese enterprises, and lacking practical guiding value.

### 3. Theoretical Support from Virtue Ethics and Organizational Ethics Research

As one of the three mainstream schools of Western ethics, virtue ethics is in sharp contrast with utilitarianism and deontology. Its core concern is the virtue and character of the subject of behavior, emphasizing "what kind of person one should be" rather than "what one should do" (Aristotle, 1999<sup>[1]</sup>; MacIntyre, 1981). The core viewpoint of virtue ethics is that moral behavior originates from the virtuous character of the subject of behavior, and virtuous character is formed through long-term moral practice and cultivation. In recent years, virtue ethics has been gradually introduced into organizational management research, forming research directions such as organizational virtue, virtue leadership and virtue management, which provide important theoretical support for the construction of virtue HRM theory. In the research on virtue leadership, Brown & Treviño (2006)<sup>[6]</sup> proposed the ethical leadership theory, emphasizing the core role of leaders' moral character, moral behavior and moral demonstration in the leadership process, and holding that ethical leadership can improve employees' moral behavior and the ethical climate of the organization. Resick *et al.*'s (2011)<sup>[42]</sup> cross-cultural study found that virtue leadership has positive organizational effects in different cultural contexts, but its specific forms are affected by cultural factors. Virtue leadership in Confucian ethics has similarities with Western ethical leadership theory, both emphasizing leaders' moral cultivation, but Confucian ethics places more emphasis on leaders' emotional care and moral responsibility for employees, which is more in line with the contextual characteristics of Chinese enterprises (Farh *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[22]</sup>.

In the research on organizational ethics, Shen & Benson (2016)<sup>[44]</sup> pointed out that organizational ethics is an important foundation for the sustainable development of enterprises, and HRM based on ethics can improve employees' organizational identification, emotional commitment and job performance. Wang *et al.*'s (2020)<sup>[52]</sup> empirical study found that enterprises' social responsibility and ethical practices can positively affect employees' job performance and organizational citizenship behavior, and its mechanism of action lies in improving employees' psychological identification and trust. These studies provide empirical support for integrating ethical dimensions into the construction of HRM theories, and also confirm the rationality and feasibility of virtue HRM theory. The development of virtue ethics and organizational ethics research provides an important theoretical perspective for breaking through the instrumental rationality framework of Western HRM theories, and also provides interdisciplinary

theoretical support for this study to construct a virtue HRM theoretical model with Confucian ethics as the core. This study deeply integrates the "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" of Confucian ethics with the core viewpoints of virtue ethics and organizational ethics research, constructs a context-embedded virtue HRM theoretical model, and realizes the organic integration of local culture and Western theories.

## Theoretical Foundation and Concept Definition

### 1. Theoretical Core and Management Connotation of Confucian Ethics

Confucian ethics is not a simple moral norm, but a complete system including value concepts, codes of conduct, institutional norms and relationship patterns, whose core is "virtue", that is, realizing the harmonious development of individuals, organizations and society through individual moral cultivation and practice (Tu, 1985; Cheng, 2019) [10]. The connotation of "virtue" in Confucian ethics has similarities with the core viewpoints of Western virtue ethics, both emphasizing individual moral character and moral practice, but the "virtue" in Confucian ethics is more relational and social, emphasizing the moral responsibility and obligation of individuals in the relationship network. From the perspective of management connotation, Confucian ethics provides a new theoretical perspective and governance logic for human resource management. Different from the instrumental rationality logic of Western HRM theories, Confucian ethics advocates a "virtue rationality" logic, that is, taking virtue as the core goal and normative foundation of HRM, and realizing the common development of employees and enterprises through the cultivation and practice of virtue. Under this logic, HRM is no longer a simple tool of "motivation and control", but a practice of "virtue guidance and cultivation"; employees are no longer rational economic men pursuing profit maximization, but "virtuous men" with moral teachability; the relationship between enterprises and employees is no longer a simple economic contractual relationship, but an ethical relationship based on virtue and trust.

The four core dimensions of "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" in Confucian ethics provide a virtue-oriented governance framework for HRM from four aspects: leadership style, decision-making criteria, institutional system and relationship foundation. "Benevolence" provides an emotional and moral foundation for HRM, emphasizing managers' virtue leadership and humanistic care; "Righteousness" provides a fair and legitimate decision-making criterion for HRM, emphasizing the ethical nature and fairness of HRM decisions; "Rites" provides an institutional and order guarantee for HRM, emphasizing the transformation of virtue requirements into specific institutional norms; "Trustworthiness" provides a long-term and stable relationship foundation for HRM, emphasizing organizational trust and long-term cooperation based on virtue. These four dimensions are interrelated and mutually supportive, constituting a complete governance system of Confucian ethics-oriented HRM.

### 2. Definition of Core Concepts

Virtue HRM refers to a context-embedded management model that takes the "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" of Confucian ethics as the core normative foundation, takes cultivating employees' virtue, constructing

ethical organizational relationships and realizing the common development of employees and enterprises as the core goals, and embeds virtue into all links of human resource management. Its core characteristics are context embeddedness, virtue orientation, relational ethics and long-term development. Different from Western mainstream HRM, virtue HRM no longer takes performance maximization as the only goal, but pursues the unity of multiple goals including performance, ethics, employee development and organizational sustainable development; it no longer regards human resources as tools, but as core subjects with moral teachability; it no longer emphasizes a single contractual governance, but emphasizes the dual governance of the integration of virtue and institutions.

Benevolence-Oriented Leadership refers to a leadership style characterized by moral care, emotional sympathy and humanistic respect based on the connotation of "Benevolence" in Confucian ethics. Its core connotation includes: managers' life care and work support for employees, respect for employees' personality and recognition of their values, attention to and cultivation of employees' development, and handling employee problems with a tolerant and understanding attitude. Benevolence-Oriented Leadership has similarities with Western ethical leadership and transformational leadership, but it places more emphasis on managers' internal moral cultivation and emotional connections with employees, and is a virtue leadership style suitable for the context of Chinese enterprises. Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making refers to HR decision-making behaviors characterized by fairness, legitimacy and morality as the core criteria based on the connotation of "Righteousness" in Confucian ethics. It covers the whole process of HRM decision-making, including recruitment decisions, training decisions, performance appraisal decisions, compensation distribution decisions, and promotion decisions and so on. The core requirements of Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making are: fair and just decision-making criteria, open and transparent decision-making process, reasonable and appropriate decision-making results, and morally legitimate decision-making behaviors, emphasizing the balance of efficiency and fairness, interests and morality in decision-making. Rites-Oriented Institutional System refers to an HRM institutional system characterized by clear roles, definite norms, and the unity of ethics and operability based on the connotation of "Rites" in Confucian ethics. Its core connotation includes: institutional design based on organizational development and employee needs, clear employee role positioning and job responsibilities, standardized HRM processes, institutional criteria in line with virtue requirements, and the unity of flexibility and rigidity in institutional implementation. The Rites-Oriented Institutional System is not a simple external constraint, but transforms Confucian virtue requirements into specific institutional norms, realizing the organic integration of virtue and institutions.

Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture refers to an organizational culture characterized by honesty, keeping promises and mutual trust based on the connotation of "Trustworthiness" in Confucian ethics. Its core connotation includes: enterprises' fulfillment of commitments to employees, managers' trust and authorization to employees, employees' loyalty and dedication to enterprises, and mutual trust and cooperation among employees. Trustworthiness-

Oriented Organizational Culture is an important practical result of virtue HRM and also an important foundation for achieving long-term organizational development, whose essence is the organizational moral climate formed by the consistency of virtue and institutions. Context Embeddedness refers to the fact that theoretical construction and management practices must be adapted to specific cultural, organizational and social contexts, and fully consider the shaping effect of contextual factors on theories and practices (Tsui, 2007<sup>[46]</sup>; John, 2006). The context embeddedness in this study mainly refers to the Confucian cultural context and the organizational context of Chinese enterprises, specifically including: organizational relationships of the differential mode of association, governance logic of the integration of reason, affection and law, family-style organizational atmosphere, and long-term oriented development concept. The context embeddedness of the virtue HRM theory is reflected in that its theoretical framework and core connotation are all based on the specific context of Chinese enterprises, and can effectively explain and guide the HRM practices of Chinese enterprises.

### 3. Confucian Ethics and Relevant Western Theories

The theoretical construction of this study is not a negation of Western HRM theories, but a theoretical innovation and integration combined with Confucian ethics and the context of Chinese enterprises on the basis of fully absorbing the reasonable core of Western mainstream management theories. The four core dimensions of "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" in Confucian ethics have room for dialogue and integration with relevant theories in the fields of Western organizational behavior and human resource management respectively, and this dialogue and integration constitute an important theoretical foundation of the virtue HRM theory. Benevolence-Oriented Leadership has similarities with Western ethical leadership theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006)<sup>[6]</sup> and transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985)<sup>[2]</sup>. Ethical leadership theory emphasizes leaders' moral character and moral demonstration, and transformational leadership theory emphasizes leaders' individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation of employees. On the basis of absorbing the reasonable core of these theories, Benevolence-Oriented Leadership places more emphasis on leaders' internal moral cultivation and emotional connections with employees, taking "loving others" as the core criterion of leadership, which is more in line with the contextual characteristics of Chinese enterprises.

Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making has an in-depth dialogue with Western organizational justice theory (Colquitt, 2001)<sup>[11]</sup>. Organizational justice theory divides organizational justice into three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice, providing an important analytical framework for the fairness of HRM decisions. On the basis of absorbing organizational justice theory, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making takes "Righteousness" as the core moral criterion for fair decision-making, emphasizing that fairness is not only formal fairness, but also essential moral legitimacy, organically combining organizational justice with moral ethics and enriching the connotation of organizational justice theory. The Rites-Oriented Institutional System has theoretical integration with Western institutional theory (North, 1990; Scott, 2008)<sup>[38, 43]</sup>. Institutional theory divides

institutions into three dimensions: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive, emphasizing the restrictive and shaping effect of institutions on organizational behavior. On the basis of absorbing institutional theory, the Rites-Oriented Institutional System integrates Confucian virtue requirements into the design and implementation of institutions, emphasizing the unity of the normativeness and ethics of institutions, transforming institutions from simple external constraints into carriers of virtue cultivation, and making up for the deficiency of Western institutional theory in paying insufficient attention to institutional ethics.

Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture complements and improves Western organizational trust theory (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995)<sup>[24, 36]</sup>. Organizational trust theory emphasizes the cognitive and emotional foundation of trust, and explores the mechanism of trust on organizational performance. On the basis of absorbing organizational trust theory, Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture defines "Trustworthiness" as a moral commitment based on virtue, emphasizing that trust is the product of the consistency of virtue and institutions, rather than a simple relational capital or management tool, making up for the deficiency of Western organizational trust theory in paying insufficient attention to the moral foundation of trust, and is more in line with the trust formation mechanism of Chinese enterprises. Through the dialogue and integration between Confucian ethics and relevant Western theories, this study realizes the organic integration of local culture and Western theories, not only absorbing the rigor and scientific nature of Western management theories, but also retaining the localization and contextuality of Confucian ethics, laying a solid theoretical foundation for constructing a localized HRM theory with Chinese characteristics.

## Construction and Propositions of the Virtue HRM Theoretical Model

### 1. Construction Logic of the Virtue HRM Theoretical Model

The core logic of this study to construct the "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" virtue HRM theoretical model is "virtue core - institutional carrier - relational result - multiple goals", that is, taking the "Benevolence and Righteousness" of Confucian ethics as the internal virtue core, providing a moral foundation and value orientation for HRM; taking "Rites" as the external institutional carrier, transforming the virtue requirements of "Benevolence and Righteousness" into specific HRM institutional norms; taking "Trustworthiness" as the relational result formed by the integration of virtue and institutions, constructing ethical organizational relationships based on trust; and ultimately realizing the multiple goals of employee virtue cultivation, organizational cohesion improvement, corporate long-term performance growth and organizational sustainable development. The core characteristic of this model is the governance logic of virtue embedded in institutions, that is, virtue is not a moral requirement external to institutions, but a core internal to institutional design, implementation and evolution; institutions are not simple external constraints, but important carriers for virtue cultivation and practice. This governance logic breaks through the limitation of "separation of institutions and ethics" in Western HRM theories, realizes the organic integration of virtue and

institutions, and also conforms to the governance characteristic of "integration of reason, affection and law" in Chinese enterprises.

From the perspective of theoretical framework, the virtue HRM theoretical model is an organic four-layer nested system, from the inside to the outside: the virtue leadership layer (Benevolence), the fair decision-making layer (Righteousness), the institutional order layer (Rites), and the trust capital layer (Trustworthiness). Among them, the virtue leadership layer is the core of the model, determining the value orientation of the fair decision-making layer and the design concept of the institutional order layer; the fair decision-making layer is the intermediate bridge, connecting the virtue leadership layer and the institutional order layer, transforming the virtue requirements of leaders into specific decision-making criteria; the institutional order layer is the external carrier, transforming the requirements of virtue leadership and fair decision-making into operable institutional norms; the trust capital layer is the practical result of the model, the organizational relational capital formed by the interaction and organic integration of the first three layers, and also an important foundation for achieving the multiple goals of the organization.

## 2. Theoretical Propositions

Based on the construction of the virtue HRM theoretical model, combined with the core connotation of Confucian ethics and the research results of relevant Western management theories, this study puts forward four testable core theoretical propositions, corresponding to the four core dimensions of "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" respectively, revealing the influence mechanism of each core dimension of virtue HRM on employees' attitudes, behaviors and organizational outcomes.

### 2.1 Benevolence-Oriented Leadership and Employee Attitudes: Proposition 1 (P1)

Characterized by moral care, emotional sympathy and humanistic respect, Benevolence-Oriented Leadership affects employees' attitudes mainly through two mediating mechanisms: emotional connection and psychological safety. According to social exchange theory and attachment theory, managers' emotional care and humanistic respect for employees will make employees generate a strong emotional resonance and willingness to reciprocate, thereby improving employees' organizational emotional commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001) [15, 18]. At the same time, the inclusive, understanding and supportive organizational atmosphere created by Benevolence-Oriented Leadership can reduce employees' psychological anxiety and behavioral concerns, improve their psychological safety, make employees more willing to express their ideas and views, and participate in organizational work more actively (Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990) [17, 33]. In addition, the "reciprocity" culture in Chinese culture (Yang, 1999) [57] also strengthens the impact of Benevolence-Oriented Leadership on employees' emotional commitment. Under the influence of the "reciprocity" culture, employees will regard managers' benevolent care as a "kindness" and generate a psychology of "repaying kindness with gratitude", which will further enhance employees' emotional identification and loyalty to the organization. Based on this, this study proposes:

**Proposition 1 (P1):** Benevolence-Oriented Leadership has a significant positive impact on Chinese enterprise employees' emotional commitment and psychological safety. Specifically, the more prominent the managers' Benevolence-Oriented Leadership behaviors, the higher the level of employees' organizational emotional commitment and the stronger their psychological safety.

### 2.2 Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making and Organizational Justice: Proposition 2 (P2)

Characterized by fairness, legitimacy and morality as the core criteria, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making directly affects employees' perceptions of organizational justice, thereby enhancing employees' trust in the organization. According to organizational justice theory (Colquitt, 2001) [11], employees' perceptions of organizational justice in HRM decisions include three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice, and Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making can meet employees' fairness needs in all three dimensions. In terms of distributive justice, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making follows the criterion of "thinking of righteousness when seeing profit" to ensure the fairness and rationality of results such as resource allocation, compensation payment and promotion decisions; in terms of procedural justice, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making emphasizes the openness and transparency of the decision-making process and equal treatment for all employees to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities; in terms of interactional justice, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making emphasizes respect and understanding for employees in the decision-making process, and timely communicates the reasons for decisions with employees to enhance their psychological identification. Employees' perceptions of organizational justice are an important foundation for the formation of organizational trust (Tyler & Lind, 1992) [50]. When employees perceive the fairness and legitimacy of HRM decisions, they will generate a strong sense of trust in the organization and managers, which will further enhance employees' organizational identification and job satisfaction. Based on this, this study proposes:

**Proposition 2 (P2):** Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making has a significant positive impact on Chinese enterprise employees' perceptions of organizational justice and organizational trust. Specifically, the more prominent the Righteousness-Oriented characteristics of HRM decisions, the higher the level of employees' perceptions of organizational justice and the stronger their trust in the organization.

### 2.3 Rites-Oriented Institutional System and Organizational Order: Proposition 3 (P3)

Characterized by clear roles, definite norms, and the unity of ethics and operability, the Rites-Oriented Institutional System affects organizational order mainly through two mediating mechanisms: role clarity and institutional identification. According to institutional theory and role theory (Scott, 2008; Biddle, 1986) [4, 43], clear role positioning and a standardized institutional system can clarify employees' job responsibilities and behavioral criteria, reduce employees' role ambiguity and role conflict, improve their role clarity, and thus maintain the normal

operation order of the organization. At the same time, the Rites-Oriented Institutional System integrates Confucian virtue requirements into institutional design, making institutions not only have external regulativeness, but also internal normativeness and cultural-cognitiveness, which can enhance employees' identification and acceptance of institutions, making employees transform from "passively abiding by institutions" to "actively practicing institutions", thereby strengthening the implementation and stability of organizational institutions. In Chinese enterprises, employees' identification with institutions is often more important than the rigid constraints of institutions (Chen, 2001). The ethical characteristics of the Rites-Oriented Institutional System can conform to employees' values and behaviors, improving the legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions. Based on this, this study proposes:

**Proposition 3 (P3):** The Rites-Oriented Institutional System has a significant positive impact on the role clarity and organizational stability of Chinese enterprises. Specifically, the more perfect the enterprise's Rites-Oriented Institutional System, the higher the employees' role clarity and the stronger the organizational stability.

#### **2.4 Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance: Proposition 4 (P4)**

Characterized by honesty, keeping promises and mutual trust, Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture affects organizational performance mainly through two mediating mechanisms: employee retention and organizational cohesion. According to organizational trust theory and social capital theory (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Putnam, 1993) [36, 40], an organizational culture based on trust can reduce employees' turnover intention and improve their retention rate, because employees will feel a sense of security, belonging and value in a trusting organizational atmosphere, and are more willing to establish long-term cooperative relationships with enterprises. At the same time, Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture can enhance mutual trust and willingness to cooperate among employees and between employees and managers, strengthen organizational cohesion and centripetal force, make the organization form a strong team synergy, and thus improve the overall organizational performance. Fukuyama (1995) [24] pointed out that trust is a core component of social capital, and organizations with a high level of trust can reduce transaction costs and coordination costs and improve organizational efficiency. In Chinese enterprises, the organizational culture based on Confucian "Trustworthiness" is more in line with the Chinese relationship model and values, and its role in improving employee retention and organizational performance is more significant (Zhang & Liu, 2021) [58]. Based on this, this study proposes:

**Proposition 4 (P4):** Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture has a significant positive impact on the employee retention rate and long-term organizational performance of Chinese enterprises. Specifically, the stronger the enterprise's Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture, the higher the employee retention rate and the better the enterprise's long-term organizational performance.

#### **Contributions of the Virtue HRM Theory**

The "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" virtue HRM theoretical model constructed in this study breaks through the instrumental rationality framework of Western HRM theories, fills the gap of localized HRM theories for Chinese enterprises, and has important theoretical contributions and innovative value for both Chinese management research and the development of global HRM theories.

Mainstream SHRM theory is built on the assumptions of economic rationality and performance-oriented logic, whose core proposition is that HRM practices affect corporate financial performance through motivation and control mechanisms. This instrumental rationality paradigm regards human resources as a tool to achieve organizational performance and HRM as a simple management technology (Becker & Huselid, 1998 [3]; Wright & McMahan, 1992). The core breakthrough of this study is to transform Confucian ethics from a traditional cultural background variable into the normative foundation and core governance logic for constructing localized HRM theories, realizing the paradigm reconstruction of HRM theories from instrumental rationality to virtue embeddedness. Different from Hofstede's (1980) [26] research paradigm that regards culture as a value dimension, this study defines Confucian ethics as the endogenous source of the institutional logic of HRM, holding that the "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" of Confucian ethics are not cultural factors external to HRM practices, but the core internal to HRM decision-making, institutional design, leadership styles and organizational culture.

Most existing Western HRM theories are based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) [5] and agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) [31], presupposing that employees' behavioral motives originate from profit maximization, and regarding employees as "rational economic men" pursuing personal interests. This assumption of human nature simplifies employees' behavioral motives, ignores non-economic motives such as employees' moral sense, sense of belonging and self-actualization, and also has a significant disconnection with the practical context of Chinese enterprises. Based on the core connotation of Confucian ethics, this study puts forward the human nature assumption of "virtuous man", which becomes the underlying logic of the virtue HRM theory.

Western institutional theory (North, 1990; Scott, 2008) [38, 43] regards institutions as external constraint structures, emphasizing the regulative role of institutions, but fails to fully explain the source of institutional legitimacy and also ignores the inherent connection between institutions and ethics. In Western HRM practices, institutions are often separated from ethics, forming a misunderstanding of "institution supremacy", leading to poor implementation effects of institutions and even triggering employees' resistance. Based on the connotation of "Benevolence, Righteousness and Rites" in Confucian ethics, this study puts forward a dual-layer governance structure of virtue embedded in institutions, breaking through the limitations of Western institutional theory and realizing the theoretical innovation of the governance structure. This dual-layer governance structure includes:

**Virtue Logic (Benevolence and Righteousness):** This is the core of the governance structure, providing a moral

foundation and value orientation for institutional design and implementation. "Benevolence" offers an emotional and humanistic basis for institutional design, emphasizing that institutions must balance employees' needs and feelings; "Righteousness" provides fair and legitimate criteria for institutional design, stressing that institutions must adhere to the moral requirements of fairness and justice. The virtue logic determines the ethical nature and legitimacy of institutions, serving as an important foundation for institutions to gain employees' recognition and support.

**Institutional Order (Rites):** This is the external carrier of the governance structure, transforming the moral requirements of the virtue logic into specific, operable institutional norms. The Rites-Oriented Institutional System integrates the virtue requirements of "Benevolence and Righteousness" into various HRM systems, such as recruitment systems, training systems, performance appraisal systems, and compensation systems. This makes institutions not only externally regulative but also internally normative and cultural-cognitive.

The core feature of this dual-layer governance structure is that virtue is inherent in institutions, and institutions carry virtue, achieving the organic integration of virtue and institutions. Virtue provides a legitimate foundation for institutions, addressing the question of "why institutions are established"; institutions serve as a practical carrier for virtue, solving the problem of "how virtue is implemented". This governance structure aligns with the core Confucian idea of "inner sageliness and outer kingship" and the governance characteristic of "integration of reason, affection, and law" in Chinese enterprises, effectively enhancing the legitimacy and implementation effect of institutions. Meanwhile, this dual-layer governance structure responds to Anne Tsui's (2007) [46] proposition of context-embedded theory, extends Li Peter Ping's (2018) research on the logic of indigenous theories, and provides an important reference for the construction of indigenous governance theories.

Western mainstream HRM theories take short-term financial performance as the core goal, emphasizing the rapid improvement of performance through incentive and control mechanisms. This performance orientation easily leads enterprises to adopt short-term behaviors that harm the long-term development of the organization (Shen & Benson, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2020) [44, 52]. At the same time, most Western organizational trust theories (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995) [24, 36] regard trust as a form of relational capital or management tool, ignoring the moral foundation and institutional source of trust. This study defines "Trustworthiness" as one of the core dimensions of Confucian ethics and proposes a long-term performance mechanism driven by trust capital, breaking through the performance framework of Western HRM theories and expanding the connotation and extension of the performance mechanism. This study argues that in Chinese enterprises, trust is not merely a management tool or relational capital, but a byproduct of the consistency between virtue and institutions, and an important moral capital and long-term development capital for enterprises. Within the framework of virtue HRM, the formation of a Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture is an inevitable result of the interaction and organic integration of Benevolence-Oriented Leadership, Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making,

and Rites-Oriented Institutional System, essentially reflecting the organizational virtue.

This trust capital-driven performance mechanism differs significantly from Western short-term performance mechanisms. Firstly, in terms of the diversity of performance goals, the mechanism no longer takes short-term financial performance as the sole goal but pursues the unity of multiple goals, including employee development, organizational cohesion, long-term financial performance, and organizational sustainable development. Secondly, regarding the endogeneity of performance drivers, the mechanism drives performance through internal trust capital and organizational cohesion rather than external incentives and controls, making it more sustainable. Thirdly, in terms of the long-term nature of performance impact, the mechanism emphasizes that the accumulation of trust capital is a long-term process, and its impact on performance is also long-term and stable, capable of promoting the long-term development of enterprises. Empirical support for this study shows that a Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture can significantly improve employee retention rates and long-term organizational performance (Zhang & Liu, 2021; Fukuyama, 1995) [24, 58]. This performance mechanism can effectively explain why some Chinese enterprises can maintain a high level of stability and competitiveness in the long-term development process, and also provides a new theoretical path for enterprises to achieve sustainable development.

Over the past decade, Chinese HRM research has flourished, forming three core research paths: first, the deepening of indigenous leadership theories, focusing on paternalistic leadership, virtue leadership, and Confucian-style leadership to explore leadership styles suitable for the Chinese context (Farh & Cheng, 2015; Fan *et al.*, 2014) [19, 20]; second, the rise of sustainable and ethical HRM, investigating the impact of corporate social responsibility and organizational ethics on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Shen & Benson, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2020) [44, 52]; third, the strengthening of trust and relational capital, exploring the formation mechanism and impact of organizational trust in Chinese enterprises (Zhang & Liu, 2021; Chen & Chen, 2004) [7, 58]. These research paths provide an important theoretical foundation for Chinese HRM research, but most focus on a single concept or dimension, lacking systematic theoretical integration, and have not yet formed a complete indigenous HRM theoretical system. The virtue HRM theoretical model constructed in this study systematically integrates the above three research paths through the four core dimensions of "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness", constructing a normative superordinate theoretical framework for Chinese HRM research.

## Conclusions

Against the background of globalization and the transformation of sustainable governance, Western mainstream HRM theories face serious cultural adaptability problems in the context of Chinese enterprises due to their roots in individualism and contractual rationality. Meanwhile, Chinese enterprise HRM research has long been trapped in the paradigm dilemma of "Western theories + Chinese data", lacking original theoretical construction based on indigenous culture. Taking Confucian ethics as the core theoretical foundation, this study responds to Anne

Tsui's (2007)<sup>[46]</sup> proposition of the context-embeddedness of management theories. Through conceptual integration, theoretical deduction, and logical construction, it systematically proposes the "Benevolence-Righteousness-Rites-Trustworthiness" virtue HRM theoretical model, constructing an indigenous human resource management theoretical framework suitable for the context of Chinese enterprises. The core research conclusions are as follows:

First, the instrumental rationality framework of Western mainstream HRM theories has inherent limitations in Chinese enterprises. Its three core assumptions—rational economic man, organization as a contractual structure, and management goal as performance maximization—conflict with the management practices of Chinese enterprises that emphasize ethical responsibility, long-term relationships, and moral reputation. The core dimensions of Confucian ethics—Benevolence, Righteousness, Rites, and Trustworthiness—provide a natural cultural and theoretical foundation for constructing indigenous Chinese HRM theories. Second, Benevolence, Righteousness, Rites, and Trustworthiness in Confucian ethics are not isolated moral norms but can be deeply integrated with the leadership style, decision-making criteria, institutional system, and organizational culture of human resource management, forming a four-layer nested virtue HRM theoretical framework. Benevolence-centered virtue leadership is the core of the model; Righteousness-based fair decision-making is the intermediate bridge of the model; Rites-based institutional order is the external guarantee of the model; and Trustworthiness-based trust capital is the practical product of the model. The four are interrelated and mutually supportive, forming the core governance logic of "virtue embedded in institutions". Third, based on the virtue HRM theoretical framework, this study proposes four testable core theoretical propositions: Benevolence-Oriented Leadership can significantly improve employees' emotional commitment and psychological safety; Righteousness-Oriented HR Decision-Making can significantly enhance employees' organizational justice perception and organizational trust; Rites-Oriented Institutional System can significantly strengthen employees' role clarity and organizational stability; Trustworthiness-Oriented Organizational Culture can significantly increase employee retention rate and enterprises' long-term performance. These four propositions reveal the impact effects of virtue HRM from both individual and organizational levels. Fourth, the virtue HRM theory has multiple core contributions to Chinese management research and the development of global HRM theories: it realizes the paradigm reconstruction of HRM theories from instrumental rationality to virtue-embedded logic; it reconstructs the human nature assumption of HRM theories from rational economic man to virtue man more suitable for the Chinese context; it constructs a dual-layer governance structure with virtue logic as the inner layer and institutional order as the outer layer, making up for the limitations of Western institutional theories; it expands the multidimensional performance mechanism from short-term financial performance to long-term trust capital-driven performance; it integrates the three core research paths of indigenous leadership, ethical HRM, and trust capital in Chinese HRM research, constructing a normative superordinate theoretical framework. Fifth, the virtue HRM model is not a universal theory and has clear theoretical boundaries: it is applicable to organizational

fields influenced by Confucian culture, distinct from traditional paternalistic leadership, and compatible with performance orientation rather than rejecting performance. Subsequent research can be carried out from four dimensions: scale development, empirical testing, cross-cultural research, and practical application to further enrich and improve the virtue HRM theoretical system (OpenAI, 2023).

This study holds that the core of human resource management is "people-oriented", and Benevolence, Righteousness, Rites, and Trustworthiness in Confucian ethics are the classic interpretation of "people-oriented". In the era of globalization and sustainable governance, the governance logic of virtue orientation, ethical identification, and trust connection advocated by the virtue HRM model not only conforms to the development needs of Chinese enterprises but also meets the development trend of global management theories. In the future, it is expected that more scholars and practitioners will pay attention to and practice virtue HRM, promoting Chinese enterprises to achieve higher-quality development, and also promoting the global HRM theory and practice to develop in a direction with more ethical connotation and humanistic care.

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