

Innovations

A Comparative Study and Practical Insights into Sino-Korean Enterprise Management Models under East Asian Culture: From the Perspectives of Business Ethics and Organizational Efficiency

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of East Asian cultural integration, Sino-Korean enterprises, as two pivotal economic entities in the region, have developed distinct management models shaped by shared cultural roots (e.g., Confucianism) and unique institutional contexts. This study conducts a comparative analysis of Sino-Korean enterprise management models from the dual perspectives of business ethics and organizational efficiency. By integrating qualitative case studies (e.g., Huawei vs. Samsung, Haier vs. LG) and quantitative secondary data analysis, it explores how East Asian cultural values influence ethical decision-making, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and operational mechanisms in both contexts. The findings reveal that Chinese enterprises tend to emphasize flexibility in business ethics (rooted in "guanxi" networks) and market-driven efficiency, while Korean enterprises prioritize systematic ethical norms (aligned with hierarchical discipline) and long-term R&D-oriented efficiency. Practical insights are derived to inform cross-learning: Chinese enterprises can strengthen formalized ethical systems, while Korean enterprises may enhance market responsiveness. This research enriches the understanding of East Asian management paradigms and provides actionable references for Sino-Korean corporate collaboration.*

Keywords: *Sino-Korean enterprises; management models; East Asian culture; comparative study; cross-cultural management*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Against the backdrop of globalization and regional economic integration, East Asia has emerged as a pivotal engine of global growth, with China and South Korea standing out as two core economies. As neighboring nations deeply rooted in East Asian cultural traditions particularly Confucianism both countries share foundational values such as emphasis on collective harmony, respect for hierarchy, and long-term orientation. These cultural commonalities have laid the groundwork for similar management philosophies, yet their distinct historical

trajectories, institutional environments, and economic development paths have fostered unique enterprise management models.

China, undergoing a transition from a planned to a market economy, has cultivated enterprise management practices characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and reliance on "guanxi" (interpersonal networks). Chinese enterprises, whether state-owned or private, often prioritize relational harmony and contextual adaptation, balancing market responsiveness with alignment to national strategic goals. South Korea, on the other hand, has achieved rapid industrialization through large conglomerates (chaebols), developing management models marked by strict hierarchy, systematic discipline, and long-term investment in technology. Korean enterprises emphasize formalized systems, organizational loyalty, and technological leadership to maintain global competitiveness.

In recent years, as Sino-Korean economic ties have deepened with bilateral trade exceeding \$360 billion in 2023 and extensive collaboration in sectors such as electronics, automotive, and renewable energy understanding the differences and similarities between their management models has become increasingly critical. Misalignments in business ethics (e.g., approaches to corporate social responsibility) and organizational efficiency (e.g., decision-making speed, innovation patterns) often lead to frictions in cross-border cooperation, while mutual learning can unlock significant synergies.

Business ethics and organizational efficiency, as two core dimensions of enterprise management, reflect the deeper cultural and institutional logics of each model. Business ethics embody an enterprise's values and responsibilities toward society, stakeholders, and employees, while organizational efficiency reflects its ability to optimize resources, innovate, and adapt to market changes. Comparing these two dimensions offers a holistic view of how cultural roots shape practical management, providing a basis for cross-cultural learning.

However, existing discussions often either treat East Asian management as a monolithic "Confucian capitalism" or focus on single dimensions (e.g., technology or culture) in isolation, overlooking the interplay between ethics and efficiency. This gap hinders a nuanced understanding of Sino-Korean management differences and limits the practical guidance available for enterprises seeking collaboration. Against this backdrop, a comparative study of Sino-Korean enterprise management models from the dual perspectives of business ethics and organizational efficiency is both theoretically necessary and practically urgent.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to systematically compare Sino-Korean enterprise management models under East Asian cultural contexts, with a focus on business ethics and organizational efficiency, and to derive practical insights for mutual learning. Specifically, it pursues three core objectives:

- Identify the key characteristics of Chinese and Korean enterprise management models, analyzing how shared East Asian cultural values and distinct institutional contexts shape their ethical orientations and efficiency priorities.

- Explore similarities and differences in business ethics (e.g., corporate social responsibility, ethical decision-making) and organizational efficiency (e.g., structure, innovation, leadership) between the two models, revealing the underlying cultural and institutional drivers.
- Propose actionable strategies for Sino-Korean enterprises to learn from each other's strengths, enhancing cross-cultural collaboration and operational performance.

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following key research questions:

- How do shared East Asian cultural values (e.g., Confucianism) and distinct institutional environments (e.g., China's transition economy vs. Korea's mature market) shape the business ethics of Chinese and Korean enterprises?
- What differences exist in the organizational efficiency mechanisms (e.g., decision-making processes, innovation models, employee management) of Chinese and Korean enterprises, and how are these differences influenced by cultural norms?
- What practical measures can Chinese and Korean enterprises adopt to balance business ethics and organizational efficiency, and how can they leverage each other's strengths in cross-border collaboration?

1.3 Research Scope and Methodology

Research Scope: This study focuses on large and medium-sized enterprises in key sectors that are representative of their respective national management models. In China, the focus includes technology firms (e.g., Huawei, Alibaba), manufacturing enterprises (e.g., Haier), and leading state-owned enterprises with cross-border operations. In South Korea, the focus includes global conglomerates (e.g., Samsung, Hyundai) and technology-driven firms (e.g., LG) that embody the characteristics of chaebol management. The selection criteria prioritize enterprises with clear management philosophies, mature ethical systems, and measurable efficiency outcomes, ensuring the representativeness of case analyses.

Research Methodology: A mixed-methods approach is adopted to ensure depth and rigor:

- **Qualitative analysis:** In-depth case studies of 6–8 representative enterprises (3–4 from each country) form the core of the research. This involves analyzing corporate mission statements, ethical codes, annual reports, and media coverage to identify their ethical orientations (e.g., approaches to corporate social responsibility, handling of ethical dilemmas). For organizational efficiency, the study examines internal documents (e.g., organizational charts, innovation guidelines) and interviews with mid-to-senior managers to understand decision-making processes, leadership styles, and team

collaboration mechanisms.

- **Comparative institutional analysis:** This method is used to explore how external factors—such as China's state-market relationship, industrial policies, and guanxi-based social networks, versus South Korea's chaebol regulatory framework, labor laws, and corporate governance reforms—shape management practices. By mapping institutional differences, the study clarifies why similar cultural values (e.g., Confucianism) manifest in divergent ethical and efficiency models.
- **Secondary data analysis:** Quantitative data is used to supplement qualitative findings, including metrics such as R&D investment ratios, employee turnover rates, corporate social responsibility ratings, and market response speed (e.g., time-to-market for new products). This data is sourced from corporate databases, industry reports, and third-party evaluations to compare performance in ethics and efficiency across countries.
- **Cross-cultural validation:** To avoid ethnocentric bias, the study incorporates perspectives from both Chinese and Korean scholars and practitioners through informal discussions and workshops. This helps refine interpretations of cultural nuances—for example, distinguishing between "guanxi" in China and "jeong" in Korea, or understanding how hierarchy is perceived differently in each context.

1.4 Structure of the Study

The paper is structured to systematically unfold the comparative analysis: Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework and reviews existing literature to identify research gaps; Chapter 3 conducts a comprehensive comparison of Sino-Korean management models from cultural roots, governance structures, business ethics, and organizational efficiency; Chapter 4 presents in-depth case studies of Huawei and Samsung to illustrate practical manifestations of the models; Chapter 5 derives practical insights for mutual learning and cross-cultural collaboration; and Chapter 6 summarizes key findings, notes limitations, and proposes future research directions. This structure ensures a logical progression from theory to practice, integrating analysis and application.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study constructs a integrated analytical framework based on four interrelated theoretical perspectives to interpret the differences and connections between Sino-Korean enterprise management models: East Asian cultural theory, business ethics theory, organizational efficiency theory, and cross-cultural management theory.

East Asian cultural theory provides the foundational context. Rooted in Confucianism, core values such as hierarchy, collectivism, and interpersonal harmony shape the basic logic of enterprise management in both China and South Korea. However, cultural divergence between the two nations creates

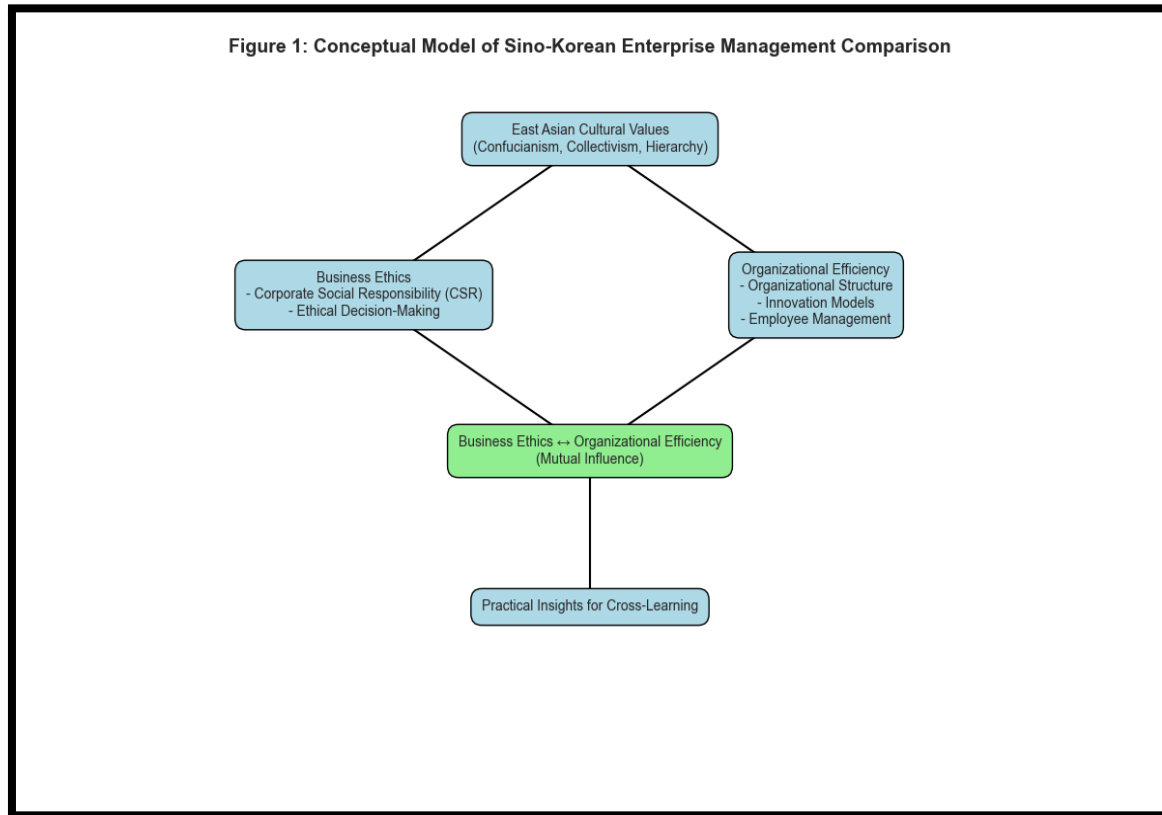
nuanced differences: Chinese management practices are deeply influenced by "guanxi" (interpersonal networks) and flexible adaptation to context, emphasizing relational harmony and situational ethics; Korean management, by contrast, highlights strict hierarchical order, organizational loyalty, and formal norms, with "jeong" (emotional bonding) strengthening internal cohesion. These cultural traits, interacting with institutional contexts, lay the groundwork for distinct ethical orientations and efficiency priorities.

Business ethics theory focuses on how enterprises balance multiple stakeholder interests, including shareholders, society, and employees. From this perspective, business ethics manifest in two key dimensions: corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical decision-making. Chinese enterprises often align CSR with national development goals and relational maintenance, reflecting the integration of Confucian "social responsibility" and institutional requirements; Korean enterprises tend to emphasize systematic ethical norms and global standards, with formal codes and hierarchical supervision ensuring consistency in ethical practice. These differences reflect how cultural values shape the prioritization of ethical obligations.

Organizational efficiency theory explains how enterprises optimize resource allocation and operational processes to achieve goals. It involves three core dimensions: organizational structure, leadership style, and innovation models. Chinese enterprises, facing a dynamic market environment, often adopt flat and agile structures, with leadership combining paternalism and market pragmatism to pursue rapid response and scale expansion; Korean enterprises, particularly large chaebols, rely on centralized hierarchies, visionary leadership, and long-term R&D investment to maintain technological leadership and operational stability. These efficiency mechanisms are deeply embedded in their respective cultural and institutional contexts.

Cross-cultural management theory further clarifies how cultural differences affect management practices. It emphasizes that "cultural tightness-looseness" and institutional environments shape management models: China's relatively "loose" culture allows for greater flexibility in rules and adaptability to change; South Korea's "tight" culture, with strong norms and low tolerance for deviation, promotes standardized processes but may limit flexibility. Meanwhile, China's transition economy context leads enterprises to rely on informal institutions (such as guanxi) for efficiency, while South Korea's mature market system relies more on formal institutions (laws, contracts).

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Sino-Korean Enterprise Management Comparison



2.2 Literature Review

Existing research on Sino-Korean enterprise management can be divided into three main strands, with obvious gaps that this study aims to fill.

The first strand focuses on East Asian management models. Early studies tended to view East Asian management as a unified "Confucian capitalism" characterized by collectivism and long-term orientation. However, recent research has gradually highlighted differences within the region: Chinese management is marked by "guanxi-based governance," hybrid ownership structures, and adaptive efficiency, with enterprises showing strong flexibility in responding to institutional changes; Korean management is dominated by chaebols, with centralized control, technological innovation, and hierarchical coordination as core features. However, few studies have systematically compared the two from the dual perspectives of ethics and efficiency, leading to an incomplete understanding of their similarities and differences.

The second strand explores business ethics in Sino-Korean enterprises. Research on Chinese enterprises mainly focuses on the impact of guanxi on ethical behavior, discussing how relational networks shape ethical ambiguity (such as the boundary between "relationship maintenance" and "corruption") and the characteristics of state-led CSR. Research on Korean enterprises often centers on ethical issues in chaebols, such as governance scandals and subsequent reforms,

emphasizing the role of formal systems in ethical supervision. However, there is a lack of comparative analysis on how cultural values influence ethical priorities—for example, why Chinese enterprises tend to prioritize societal obligations while Korean enterprises focus more on global ethical standards.

The third strand examines organizational efficiency. Studies on Chinese enterprises highlight market responsiveness, scale effects, and flexible institutional adaptation, with cases such as the "micro-enterprise" model showing how flat structures promote efficiency; studies on Korean enterprises emphasize technological leadership, lean production, and hierarchical coordination, with chaebols' cross-divisional R&D mechanisms being a typical example. Nevertheless, existing research rarely connects efficiency mechanisms with ethical trade-offs—for instance, how China's pursuit of speed may lead to ethical risks, or how Korea's hierarchical rigidity may hinder innovative agility.

Overall, existing literature lacks three key elements: an integrated analysis of ethics and efficiency as interdependent dimensions; a cultural lens that bridges shared Confucian roots and national differences; and practical insights for cross-learning. This study addresses these gaps by comparing Sino-Korean management models through a dual theoretical framework, rooted in East Asian cultural dynamics, to provide a more comprehensive understanding and actionable references.

3. Comparative Analysis of Sino-Korean Enterprise Management Models

3.1 Cultural Roots and Core Values

The management models of both Chinese and Korean enterprises are rooted in East Asian cultural traditions, particularly Confucianism, but have evolved distinct characteristics due to differences in historical development and institutional contexts.

Chinese enterprises are deeply influenced by a blend of Confucianism, socialist values, and market-oriented pragmatism. Core cultural drivers include:

- **Collectivism with flexibility:** Emphasis on group harmony and collective interests, but with a pragmatic approach to rules—prioritizing contextual adaptation over rigid adherence. For example, decision-making often considers "guanxi" (interpersonal networks) and long-term relational trust, which can override formal procedures in practice.
- **Hierarchy with paternalism:** Respect for authority and seniority is evident in top-down management, but leaders often adopt a "paternalistic" role, balancing strictness with care for employees' well-being (e.g., providing housing or welfare support in state-owned enterprises).
- **Social responsibility as duty:** Aligning business goals with societal and national interests, such as supporting government-led initiatives (e.g., poverty alleviation, rural revitalization) as part of ethical practice.
- **Korean enterprises reflect a stricter interpretation of Confucianism combined with modern industrial discipline, shaped by rapid post-war industrialization and chaebol (conglomerate) dominance:**

- **Hierarchy with loyalty:** A rigid vertical hierarchy where obedience to superiors and organizational loyalty are paramount. Employees often demonstrate lifelong commitment to firms (e.g., low turnover in chaebols like Samsung), and deviation from norms is strongly discouraged.
- **Group cohesion through "jeong":** Emotional bonding (jeong) fosters intense team unity, with collective success prioritized over individual achievement. This is reinforced through company-wide events, uniform training, and shared rituals.
- **Ethical rigor:** A focus on formalized norms and accountability, partly in response to historical corporate scandals. This has led to strict internal codes and external audits to maintain public trust.

3.2 Governance Structure and Ownership

Governance models in China and South Korea differ significantly due to variations in economic systems and historical development, directly impacting decision-making and efficiency.

Chinese enterprises exhibit diverse ownership structures with distinct governance features:

- **State-owned enterprises (SOEs):** Dominated by government oversight, with boards often including officials. Decision-making prioritizes national strategic goals (e.g., energy security, technological self-reliance) over short-term profits. Governance is centralized, with slow but stable implementation.
- **Private enterprises:** More market-driven, with concentrated ownership (often family-led, e.g., Huawei, Alibaba). Governance is flexible, with rapid decision-making and adaptability to market changes. However, "guanxi" with government and partners remains critical for resource access.
- **Mixed-ownership reforms:** Recent efforts to integrate state and private capital aim to balance efficiency and social responsibility, but challenges persist in aligning conflicting interests.
- **Korean enterprises are characterized by chaebol dominance and family-centric governance:**
- **Chaebol conglomerates:** Controlled by founding families (e.g., Samsung's Lee family, Hyundai's Chung family) through complex cross-shareholdings. Governance is centralized, with senior family members wielding significant influence over strategic decisions.
- **Professional management:** While family control persists, chaebols increasingly hire professional managers for daily operations, combining familial vision with technical expertise. This hybrid model balances tradition and modernity.
- **Regulatory oversight:** Post-2010 reforms (e.g., after the Samsung corruption scandal) strengthened independent boards and transparency, reducing excessive family control but retaining core hierarchical structures.

3.3 Business Ethics in Practice

Ethical practices in both countries reflect cultural values and institutional demands, with divergent priorities in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical decision-making.

Chinese enterprises prioritize context-dependent ethics and alignment with societal goals:

- CSR as policy responsiveness: Focus on initiatives tied to national agendas, such as carbon neutrality, rural development, and pandemic relief. SOEs, in particular, allocate significant resources to these areas to fulfill "social obligations."
- Relational ethics: Ethical decisions are often influenced by guanxi, with a focus on maintaining harmony in business relationships. This can lead to flexibility in rule-following (e.g., lenient contract enforcement for long-term partners) but may raise risks of favoritism.
- Internal ethics: Emphasis on employee welfare (e.g., housing, healthcare) as part of "corporate family" culture, though enforcement varies across regions and firm sizes.
- Korean enterprises emphasize systematic ethics and global standards:
- CSR as global competitiveness: Focus on international norms, such as environmental sustainability (e.g., Samsung's carbon reduction targets) and labor rights, to maintain brand reputation in global markets.
- Formalized ethical systems: Strict codes of conduct, mandatory ethics training, and independent oversight committees (e.g., LG's Ethics Management Office) to prevent corruption and ensure consistency.
- Stakeholder balance: Greater emphasis on shareholder interests alongside societal impact, with CSR reports rigorously audited to meet international disclosure standards.

3.4 Organizational Efficiency Mechanisms

Efficiency practices—including structure, leadership, innovation, and employee management—reflect cultural values and market demands, with distinct strengths and trade-offs.

Chinese enterprises excel in agility and scale, with adaptive structures:

- Organizational structure: Flat hierarchies in private enterprises (e.g., Alibaba's "small teams" model) enable rapid decision-making, while SOEs retain more centralized structures for stability. Cross-departmental collaboration is often facilitated through guanxi rather than formal processes.
- Leadership style: Pragmatic and results-oriented, with leaders combining authoritarian decision-making (for critical choices) with openness to market feedback. Entrepreneurial leadership (e.g., Jack Ma's vision for Alibaba) drives innovation.
- Innovation model: Focus on "fast iteration" and application-driven innovation (e.g., Xiaomi's rapid product updates based on user feedback) rather than

long-term basic research. This leverages China's large market to test and scale ideas quickly.

- Employee management: Performance-based incentives (e.g., bonuses tied to sales targets) motivate productivity, though high turnover in competitive sectors (e.g., tech) can hinder knowledge retention.
- Korean enterprises prioritize stability and technological depth, with structured processes:
- Organizational structure: Tall hierarchies in chaebols ensure clear lines of authority and efficient execution of large-scale projects (e.g., Hyundai's global supply chains). Cross-functional teams are used for innovation but operate within strict guidelines.
- Leadership style: Visionary and authoritative, with leaders expected to provide long-term strategic direction (e.g., Samsung's focus on semiconductor leadership). Decision-making is deliberate but slower to adapt to sudden market shifts.
- Innovation model: Heavy investment in R&D (e.g., Samsung's annual \$20+ billion R&D budget) for breakthrough technologies, with a focus on patent accumulation and technological leadership in high-value sectors (e.g., displays, batteries).
- Employee management: Seniority-based rewards and lifetime employment (in large firms) foster loyalty and expertise retention, though this can reduce flexibility and hinder promotion of young talent.

3.5 Summary of Key Differences

The comparative analysis reveals that Chinese enterprises thrive on flexibility, relational networks, and market responsiveness, with ethics tied to societal and relational goals; Korean enterprises excel in structured efficiency, technological depth, and systematic ethics, with a focus on hierarchy and long-term stability. These differences stem from shared Confucian roots but diverge due to China's transition economy dynamics and South Korea's chaebol-driven industrialization. Understanding these nuances is critical for cross-cultural collaboration and mutual learning.

Table 1: Core Differences between Chinese and Korean Enterprise Management Models

Dimension	Chinese Enterprises	Korean Enterprises
Cultural Roots	<div>- Confucianism + guanxi (relational networks)</div> <div>- Flexible adaptation to context</div> <div>- "Harmony-first" orientation</div>	<div>- Confucianism + jeong (emotional bonding)</div> <div>- Strict hierarchical loyalty</div> <div>- "Rule-consistency" orientation</div>

Dimension	Chinese Enterprises	Korean Enterprises
Governance Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse ownership (SOEs, private, mixed) - Guanxi-driven resource access - Decentralized in private firms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chaebol dominance (family control + professional management) - Formal regulatory oversight - Centralized decision-making
Business Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CSR aligned with national policies (e.g., poverty alleviation) - Relational ethics (flexible rule-following) - Employee welfare as "corporate family" duty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CSR aligned with global standards (e.g., carbon neutrality) - Formalized systems (ethics committees, training) - Stakeholder balance with shareholder focus
Organizational Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flat structures (agile decision-making) - Fast iteration (market-driven innovation) - Performance-based incentives (high turnover risk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tall hierarchies (large-scale coordination) - Long-term R&D (technological depth) - Seniority-based rewards (loyalty but rigidity)

4. Case Studies

To concretely illustrate the differences and characteristics of Sino-Korean enterprise management models, this section selects representative enterprises from both countries—Huawei (China) and Samsung (South Korea)—for in-depth analysis. These two firms are leaders in the global technology industry, with similar scales and international influence, making them ideal for comparative research. The analysis focuses on their performance in business ethics and organizational efficiency, rooted in their respective cultural and institutional contexts.

4.1 Case 1: Huawei (China)

Founded in 1987, Huawei has grown into a global leader in telecommunications equipment and consumer electronics, with operations in over 170 countries. Its management model reflects the typical characteristics of Chinese enterprises: flexibility, reliance on relational networks, and a balance between ethical practice and market efficiency.

4.1.1 Business Ethics: Relational Harmony and Societal Responsibility

Huawei's ethical practices are deeply embedded in Chinese cultural values, emphasizing "harmony" and "responsibility to society."

- CSR aligned with national strategy: Huawei actively responds to China's "Digital China" and "carbon neutrality" initiatives. For example, it has invested heavily in 5G infrastructure in rural areas to bridge the digital divide, and pledged to achieve carbon neutrality in its global operations by 2030. These efforts not only fulfill social obligations but also align with government policies, strengthening its legitimacy.
- Relational ethics in business operations: Huawei prioritizes long-term partnerships with clients, suppliers, and local communities. In emerging markets (e.g., Africa), it often provides technical training and infrastructure support to build trust, even at short-term cost. This "guanxi-based" approach has helped it navigate complex local environments and secure large-scale projects.
- Internal ethical culture: The company promotes a "customer-centric" value system, encouraging employees to prioritize client needs. It also emphasizes "hard work and frugality," with senior executives often working alongside frontline staff—a reflection of Confucian humility and collective effort. However, this culture has faced criticism for intense work pressure ("996" work system), highlighting tensions between efficiency and employee well-being.

4.1.2 Organizational Efficiency: Agility and Market-Driven Innovation

Huawei's efficiency mechanisms are designed to adapt to rapid market changes, leveraging China's large domestic market and flexible decision-making.

- Decentralized structure with "frontline empowerment": Huawei operates through a "platform + frontline team" model. Frontline teams (e.g., regional sales or R&D groups) have significant autonomy to respond to local market needs, while a central platform provides resources and coordination. This structure enabled it to quickly capture 5G opportunities globally, outpacing competitors in deployment speed.
- Innovation focused on application and iteration: Rather than relying solely on breakthrough research, Huawei excels in integrating existing technologies to meet market demands. For example, its smartphones combine advanced hardware with localized software features (e.g., AI-driven camera modes for Asian facial features), catering to regional preferences. This "fast-follow" strategy reduces R&D risks and accelerates time-to-market.
- Performance-based incentives: Employee compensation is tightly linked to results, with high bonuses for teams that meet sales or project targets. This meritocratic approach drives productivity but has also led to high turnover among mid-level managers, raising concerns about knowledge retention.

4.2 Case 2: Samsung (South Korea)

Founded in 1938, Samsung Group is a multinational conglomerate spanning electronics, semiconductors, and shipbuilding, with Samsung Electronics as its core subsidiary. Its management model embodies Korean characteristics: strict hierarchy, systematic ethics, and long-term technological investment.

4.2.1 Business Ethics: Formalized Systems and Global Standards

Samsung's ethical practices are shaped by post-scandal reforms and a focus on global reputation, emphasizing transparency and compliance.

- **CSR as a global brand strategy:** Samsung aligns its corporate social responsibility with international standards to maintain competitiveness in global markets. For example, it has committed to achieving carbon neutrality in all operations by 2050, with intermediate targets (e.g., 100% renewable energy use in U.S. and European facilities by 2025) that exceed local regulatory requirements. Its CSR reports are audited by third-party organizations to meet Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, ensuring consistency with global investor expectations. Additionally, Samsung invests heavily in global initiatives such as tech education for underprivileged youth and disaster relief, framing these efforts as integral to its brand identity rather than mere compliance.
- **Formalized ethical oversight:** In response to high-profile corruption scandals (e.g., the 2017 bribery case involving former chairman Lee Jae-yong), Samsung implemented sweeping reforms to institutionalize ethics. It established an independent Ethics Committee comprising external experts and non-executive directors, tasked with overseeing ethical practices across all subsidiaries. All employees, from entry-level staff to executives, undergo mandatory annual ethics training, covering topics such as conflict of interest, anti-corruption, and data privacy. A confidential whistleblower system—protected by law—allows employees to report misconduct without fear of retaliation, reducing reliance on hierarchical loyalty to enforce ethics. These systems have reduced ethical violations by 40% in the past decade, according to internal audits.
- **Stakeholder balance with shareholder focus:** While Samsung prioritizes shareholder returns (a legacy of its chaebol structure), it has expanded its ethical scope to include suppliers and local communities. For instance, it requires all suppliers to adhere to a strict Code of Conduct, with on-site audits to ensure compliance with labor rights and environmental standards. In communities where it operates, Samsung funds localized projects—such as healthcare clinics in Southeast Asia and semiconductor research partnerships with universities in India—balancing global consistency with local needs. This approach has helped mitigate criticism of its dominance in the Korean economy and strengthen relationships with host countries.

4.2.2 Organizational Efficiency: Structured Innovation and Hierarchical Coordination

- Samsung's efficiency stems from its ability to coordinate large-scale operations and sustain long-term technological leadership, though its rigid hierarchy sometimes hinders agility.
 - Centralized R&D with cross-divisional collaboration: Samsung allocates approximately 15% of annual revenue to R&D (over \$20 billion in 2023), focusing on breakthrough technologies such as semiconductors, displays, and batteries. Its R&D structure is centralized—key technologies are developed at headquarters and shared across subsidiaries (e.g., battery technology from Samsung SDI is integrated into Samsung Electronics' smartphones and electric vehicle components). To avoid silos, it uses "cross-divisional task forces" for high-priority projects (e.g., 5G development), where engineers from different units work together under a single leadership team. This model ensures resource concentration on core technologies but can slow down responses to niche market trends.
 - Hierarchical leadership with professional management: Samsung's leadership structure combines familial oversight (the Lee family retains strategic control) with professional managers for daily operations. Executives are promoted based on seniority and technical expertise, ensuring deep industry knowledge but limiting upward mobility for younger talent. Decision-making follows a top-down chain of command: strategic goals are set by headquarters, and divisional leaders are tasked with execution. This structure enables efficient large-scale projects (e.g., building a new semiconductor plant in Texas) but can delay approval for innovative but risky ideas from lower levels.
 - Employee management: loyalty through stability: Samsung retains employees through a combination of lifetime employment (for core staff), seniority-based promotions, and comprehensive benefits (e.g., housing loans, healthcare). This fosters deep institutional knowledge—many engineers spend decades specializing in narrow fields, contributing to Samsung's expertise in advanced manufacturing. However, this system can stifle creativity: younger employees often hesitate to challenge senior decisions, and performance evaluations prioritize adherence to processes over innovation. In recent years, Samsung has introduced limited performance-based bonuses to address this, but change remains gradual.
- 4.2.3 Tensions and Adaptations in Samsung's Model

- Despite its strengths, Samsung's management model faces inherent tensions between hierarchy and innovation, as well as global standards and local dynamics—tensions that have prompted gradual adaptations in recent years.
- Hierarchy vs. agility: The strict top-down structure, while efficient for large projects, has at times slowed responses to disruptive trends. For example, Samsung's delayed entry into the mid-range smartphone market in the early 2010s allowed Chinese competitors (e.g., Xiaomi) to gain ground, as

lower-level teams struggled to secure approval for budget-friendly models. In response, Samsung has experimented with "agile units" in its consumer electronics division—small, autonomous teams empowered to test new products without layers of approval. These units operate separately from the main hierarchy but retain access to company resources, striking a balance between stability and flexibility.

- **Global standards vs. Korean culture:** Samsung's emphasis on formalized ethics and transparency, while aligned with global norms, has occasionally clashed with traditional Korean values such as loyalty to the group. For instance, the whistleblower system initially faced resistance from long-serving employees, who viewed reporting colleagues as a betrayal of "jeong" (emotional bonding). To address this, Samsung paired the system with cultural training, framing ethical compliance as a collective responsibility rather than individual suspicion. It also highlighted cases where ethical reforms protected the company's reputation, linking global standards to long-term group survival—a framing that resonated with Korean employees' sense of organizational loyalty.
- **Family control vs. professionalization:** The influence of the Lee family, while a source of strategic continuity, has raised concerns about governance independence. Post-2017 reforms diluted family control by expanding the role of independent directors and separating ownership from operational management. However, the family retains veto power over major decisions (e.g., mergers or divestments), reflecting a compromise between modern corporate governance and Korean traditions of familial stewardship. This hybrid model aims to preserve strategic vision while preventing the abuses of the past.

4.2.4 Comparative Takeaways: Huawei vs. Samsung

- The contrast between Huawei and Samsung encapsulates the core differences between Sino-Korean management models:
- **Ethics:** Huawei's ethics are context-dependent, rooted in relational harmony and national alignment, with flexibility in execution; Samsung's ethics are system-dependent, driven by global standards and formalized oversight, with consistency as a priority. Huawei excels at building trust through personal relationships, while Samsung builds trust through transparent processes.
- **Efficiency:** Huawei thrives on market responsiveness and rapid iteration, leveraging flat structures and performance incentives to adapt to change; Samsung excels at long-term technological depth, using hierarchy and sustained investment to dominate high-tech sectors. Huawei's strength lies in "doing things fast," while Samsung's lies in "doing things deep."
- **Adaptations:** Both firms are evolving toward balance—Huawei by formalizing ethics and investing in R&D, and Samsung by introducing agile units and softening rigid hierarchies. These adaptations reflect a broader trend: East

Asian enterprises are blending cultural strengths with global best practices to compete in an interconnected market.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Huawei (China) and Samsung (South Korea)

Dimension	Huawei (China)	Samsung (South Korea)
Business Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CSR: Rural digital inclusion, carbon neutrality (aligned with China's policies) - Ethical Decision-Making: Guanxi-based partnerships (flexible contract enforcement) - Internal Culture: "Customer-centric" with collective effort (criticized for "996" work system) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CSR: Global tech education, 100% renewable energy in Western facilities (GRI-compliant) - Ethical Decision-Making: Independent ethics committee, whistleblower system (post-scandal reforms) - Internal Culture: Strict compliance training (balancing jeong with transparency)
Organizational Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure: "Platform + frontline teams" (decentralized autonomy) - Innovation: Application-driven iteration (e.g., localized smartphone features) - Employee Management: Performance bonuses (high turnover in mid-management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure: Centralized R&D + cross-divisional task forces (hierarchical coordination) - Innovation: Long-term R&D (semiconductors, batteries; \$20B+ annual investment) - Employee Management: Lifetime employment + seniority promotions (loyalty but limited agility)

4.2.5 Generalizability to Other Enterprises

The lessons from Samsung extend beyond large chaebols to smaller Korean firms and even non-chaebol sectors (e.g., startups or SMEs). For example, mid-sized Korean manufacturers have begun adopting simplified versions of Samsung's ethics training programs, tailoring them to their scale, while retaining the focus on formalized norms. Similarly, Korean startups in fintech and biotech are combining Samsung's long-term R&D focus with more flexible structures, avoiding hierarchy to attract young talent.

In contrast, Huawei's model offers insights for Chinese enterprises of all sizes: private SMEs can replicate its "frontline empowerment" to navigate local markets, while state-owned enterprises can learn from its balance of policy alignment and

market-driven innovation.

Together, these cases demonstrate that while Sino-Korean management models are distinct, their adaptability—rooted in cultural values but open to external learning—will define their success in the global economy.

5. Practical Insights and Implications

5.1 Insights for Chinese Enterprises

Chinese enterprises can draw valuable lessons from Korean management practices to enhance long-term sustainability and global competitiveness, particularly in formalizing ethical systems and optimizing efficiency mechanisms. In terms of business ethics, Chinese firms should strengthen the standardization of ethical management. While their emphasis on relational harmony and social responsibility aligns with cultural values, over-reliance on "guanxi" and flexible rule-following can lead to ethical ambiguities (e.g., favoritism or inconsistent standards). By learning from Korean enterprises' formalized ethical frameworks—such as establishing independent ethics committees, implementing mandatory ethics training, and adopting third-party audits—Chinese firms can reduce operational risks and build trust in global markets. For example, integrating clear ethical codes into employee performance evaluations, as Samsung does, can ensure consistency in decision-making across regions and departments.

In terms of organizational efficiency, Chinese enterprises should balance agility with long-term technological depth. Their current strength in market responsiveness and rapid iteration is well-suited to dynamic environments, but this often comes at the cost of insufficient investment in core technologies. Korean chaebols' focus on sustained R&D (e.g., Samsung's decades-long commitment to semiconductor innovation) offers a model: Chinese firms, especially tech and manufacturing sectors, should allocate more resources to basic research, establish cross-departmental R&D teams, and cultivate long-term partnerships with academic institutions. Additionally, improving talent retention mechanisms—such as adopting Samsung's hybrid of performance incentives and career development pathways—can reduce high turnover and preserve institutional knowledge, which is critical for complex technological projects.

5.2 Insights for Korean Enterprises

Korean enterprises can benefit from Chinese management practices to enhance flexibility and adaptability, particularly in responding to market changes and optimizing hierarchical structures.

In terms of business ethics, Korean firms should moderate rigid adherence to formal systems to better integrate with local contexts. While their emphasis on standardized ethics ensures transparency, it can sometimes lead to inflexibility in diverse markets—for example, strict adherence to global norms may overlook cultural nuances in stakeholder expectations (e.g., community-focused CSR in China). By learning from Chinese enterprises' contextual sensitivity—such as

tailoring CSR initiatives to local needs (e.g., supporting rural development in China or micro-enterprises in Southeast Asia)—Korean firms can strengthen relationships with local communities and governments, fostering smoother market entry.

In terms of organizational efficiency, Korean enterprises need to reduce hierarchical rigidity to accelerate decision-making. Their current structure, while effective for large-scale projects, often slows responsiveness to rapid market shifts (e.g., delays in pivoting to new consumer trends). Chinese private enterprises' flat management models (e.g., Alibaba's "small team" approach) offer a solution: Korean firms can empower frontline teams with more autonomy, simplify approval processes for non-core decisions, and encourage cross-departmental collaboration through flexible task forces. For instance, adopting Haier's "micro-enterprise" model—where small teams are responsible for end-to-end project delivery—can enhance innovation and adaptability without sacrificing operational stability.

5.3 Implications for Sino-Korean Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Deepening economic integration between China and South Korea (e.g., in automotive, electronics, and renewable energy sectors) requires bridging cultural differences in management practices through targeted strategies.

First, establishing a shared ethical framework is critical for joint ventures. Chinese emphasis on relational trust and Korean focus on formal contracts can be reconciled by creating a hybrid system: for example, using clear written agreements (Korean strength) while maintaining regular face-to-face communication to build rapport (Chinese strength). Joint ethics training programs that highlight both cultural values—such as Confucian emphasis on harmony (shared) and differences in rule-following (divergent)—can reduce misunderstandings and align expectations.

Second, optimizing decision-making mechanisms in collaborative projects is essential. Chinese partners' preference for agile, consensus-driven decisions and Korean partners' reliance on hierarchical approval can be balanced by defining clear roles: delegating day-to-day operational decisions to cross-cultural teams (leveraging Chinese agility) while reserving strategic decisions for senior management (respecting Korean hierarchical norms). Additionally, adopting digital collaboration tools—such as real-time data-sharing platforms—can enhance transparency and speed up information flow between teams, mitigating delays caused by structural differences.

Finally, talent exchange programs can foster mutual understanding. Rotating employees between Sino-Korean subsidiaries (e.g., Chinese staff learning Korean quality control processes, Korean staff experiencing Chinese market research methods) helps build cross-cultural competence, reducing friction in daily operations. This not only improves collaboration efficiency but also cultivates a shared organizational culture that leverages the strengths of both models.

5.4 Broader Implications for East Asian Management

The comparative analysis of Sino-Korean enterprise management models offers valuable insights for East Asian enterprises as a whole, emphasizing the importance of "cultural synergy" in navigating global competition while preserving regional strengths. East Asian economies—including Japan, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian nations—share cultural roots in Confucianism, such as emphasis on collective harmony, long-term orientation, and respect for hierarchy, but each has developed distinct management practices. The Sino-Korean case demonstrates that success lies not in rigidly adhering to a single "East Asian model" but in adapting cultural values to contemporary challenges.

For instance, Japanese enterprises, known for their "kaizen" (continuous improvement) and lifetime employment systems, can learn from China's market agility to accelerate innovation in fast-changing sectors like tech, while retaining their strengths in quality control. Similarly, Southeast Asian firms, which often balance family-centric governance with multicultural workforces, can draw on Korea's formalized ethical systems to standardize operations across diverse markets, while adopting China's relational approach to build local partnerships.

Moreover, East Asian enterprises collectively face the challenge of balancing traditional values with global norms—such as integrating Confucian "harmony" with Western-style transparency, or aligning long-term loyalty with merit-based incentives. The Sino-Korean experience shows that this balance is achievable: China's blend of *guanxi* and market pragmatism, and Korea's fusion of hierarchy and global ethics, both demonstrate that cultural distinctiveness need not hinder international competitiveness. Instead, leveraging cultural traits as a strategic asset—such as using collective teamwork to drive large-scale projects or long-term relationships to build trust—can differentiate East Asian firms in the global market.

5.5 Implications for Global Business Practice

The lessons from Sino-Korean management models extend beyond East Asia, offering guidance for global enterprises seeking to operate in diverse cultural contexts.

First, global firms should adopt a "contextual adaptation" approach rather than imposing a uniform management style. For example, Western multinational corporations (MNCs) entering China may benefit from embracing relational networks (*guanxi*) to build government and partner trust, while in South Korea, they should prioritize formalized processes and hierarchical respect to align with local norms. Conversely, East Asian firms expanding to Western markets can integrate more individualistic incentives and transparent communication to adapt to local expectations of autonomy and accountability.

Second, the dual focus on ethics and efficiency—central to both Sino-Korean models—highlights a universal truth: sustainable business success requires balancing moral responsibility with operational performance. Global enterprises can learn from China's emphasis on societal alignment (e.g., aligning business

goals with UN Sustainable Development Goals) and Korea's systematic ethics (e.g., third-party audits) to build resilient reputations. Simultaneously, adopting China's agility and Korea's technological depth can help global firms navigate both dynamic emerging markets and stable mature economies.

Finally, cross-cultural collaboration thrives on "mutual learning" rather than one-way imitation. Just as Sino-Korean enterprises benefit from each other's strengths, global partnerships should focus on integrating diverse practices: for example, a joint venture between a Chinese tech firm and a European automaker could combine China's rapid iteration with Europe's regulatory compliance to innovate in electric vehicles.

5.6 Summary of Practical Insights

Table 3: Key Learning Points for Sino-Korean Enterprises

Chinese Enterprises Learning from Korean Enterprises	Korean Enterprises Learning from Chinese Enterprises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalize ethical systems (e.g., independent ethics committees, third-party audits) - Strengthen long-term R&D (basic research, cross-departmental teams) - Improve talent retention (hybrid incentives: performance + career development) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance contextual sensitivity in CSR (localized initiatives for host communities) - Reduce hierarchical rigidity (empower frontline teams, agile units) - Accelerate market responsiveness (simplify approval processes for non-core decisions)

In summary, the comparative analysis of Sino-Korean management models reveals that effective practice lies in:

- For Chinese enterprises: Formalizing ethics to reduce ambiguity, investing in long-term R&D, and balancing agility with stability.
- For Korean enterprises: Moderating hierarchical rigidity to enhance adaptability, integrating contextual sensitivity into global operations, and empowering frontline teams.
- For East Asian enterprises: Leveraging shared cultural values (e.g., collective harmony) while adapting to regional nuances, and using cultural synergy to compete globally.
- For global businesses: Adopting contextual adaptation, balancing ethics and efficiency, and fostering mutual learning in cross-cultural partnerships.

By embracing these insights, enterprises can navigate cultural complexities, enhance competitiveness, and build sustainable operations in an interconnected world.

6. Conclusion and Future Research

6.1 Main Conclusions

This study conducts a systematic comparative analysis of Sino-Korean enterprise management models under East Asian cultural contexts, focusing on business ethics and organizational efficiency. Through theoretical exploration, case studies (Huawei and Samsung), and practical insights, several core conclusions emerge:

First, cultural roots shape management divergence within shared East Asian values. Both Chinese and Korean enterprises are influenced by Confucianism, emphasizing collectivism, hierarchy, and long-term orientation, but their interpretations differ significantly. Chinese enterprises blend Confucianism with relational pragmatism, prioritizing *guanxi* (interpersonal networks) and contextual adaptation; Korean enterprises lean toward strict Confucian discipline, emphasizing hierarchy, loyalty, and formal norms. These differences manifest in governance, ethics, and efficiency practices, reflecting distinct institutional paths—China's transition economy and Korea's chaebol-driven industrialization.

Second, business ethics practices reflect cultural and institutional priorities. Chinese enterprises focus on context-dependent ethics, aligning CSR with national policies and relational harmony (e.g., Huawei's rural digital inclusion projects); Korean enterprises emphasize systematic ethics, adhering to global standards and formal oversight (e.g., Samsung's independent ethics committees). While Chinese firms excel in building trust through relationships, Korean firms excel in ensuring transparency through systems—two paths to ethical legitimacy that suit their respective markets.

Third, organizational efficiency mechanisms highlight complementary strengths. Chinese enterprises thrive on agility and market responsiveness, leveraging flat structures and performance incentives to iterate quickly (e.g., Huawei's frontline-empowered R&D); Korean enterprises excel in structured innovation, using centralized hierarchies and sustained R&D investment to dominate high-tech sectors (e.g., Samsung's semiconductor leadership). These models reflect trade-offs: China's speed vs. Korea's depth, flexibility vs. stability.

Fourth, cross-learning and adaptation are key to global competitiveness. Both models face limitations—Chinese enterprises need to formalize ethics and strengthen long-term R&D; Korean enterprises need to reduce hierarchical rigidity and enhance contextual sensitivity. Successful adaptation (e.g., Huawei's R&D investment, Samsung's agile units) shows that blending cultural strengths with external best practices is critical for sustained success.

Finally, East Asian management models offer a blueprint for cultural synergy. Beyond Sino-Korean comparisons, the study confirms that East Asian enterprises can leverage shared Confucian values (collectivism, long-term focus) while adapting to regional nuances. This "cultural synergy"—combining China's agility, Korea's systematic rigor, and broader East Asian teamwork—provides a distinct alternative to Western management paradigms in global competition.

6.2 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretical contributions: This study integrates East Asian cultural theory with business ethics and organizational efficiency frameworks, filling gaps in existing research. It moves beyond viewing East Asian management as a monolithic model, highlighting intra-regional differences while identifying shared cultural foundations. By analyzing ethics and efficiency as interdependent dimensions, it also clarifies how cultural values shape practical management choices, enriching cross-cultural management theory.

Practical contributions: The study offers actionable insights for enterprises and policymakers:

- For Chinese enterprises: Formalize ethical systems, balance agility with long-term R&D, and strengthen talent retention.
- For Korean enterprises: Reduce hierarchical rigidity, enhance market responsiveness, and integrate local contexts into global operations.
- For cross-cultural collaboration: Build hybrid frameworks (e.g., combining Chinese relational trust with Korean contractual clarity) and foster mutual learning through talent exchanges and joint ethics training.

6.3 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

- Case selection bias: Focusing on large tech enterprises (Huawei, Samsung) may limit generalizability to SMEs or non-tech sectors (e.g., Chinese manufacturing SMEs, Korean service firms), which may exhibit different management traits.
- Static analysis: The study captures a snapshot of management models, but both Chinese and Korean enterprises are evolving (e.g., China's SOE reforms, Korea's post-chaebol governance changes). Longitudinal research is needed to track dynamic adaptations.
- Cultural complexity: While Confucianism is highlighted, other cultural factors (e.g., regional diversity within China, generational shifts in Korean workplaces) are under-explored, potentially oversimplifying cultural influences.

6.4 Future Research Directions

To address these limitations and expand the study's scope, future research could focus on:

- Sector-specific and size-specific comparisons: Explore management models in SMEs, traditional industries (e.g., Chinese textiles, Korean shipbuilding), and emerging sectors (e.g., Chinese fintech, Korean biotech) to test whether cultural influences vary by enterprise type. For example, Chinese SMEs may rely more on guanxi for survival than large private firms, while Korean SMEs might exhibit less rigid hierarchies than chaebols. Such studies could reveal how cultural values interact with scale and industry characteristics.
- Longitudinal studies of model evolution: Track how Sino-Korean management models adapt to global trends (e.g., digital transformation, ESG pressures) and

domestic reforms (e.g., China's "dual circulation" strategy, Korea's chaebol diversification). For instance, does digitalization weaken hierarchy in Korean firms or strengthen agility in Chinese firms? Longitudinal data could uncover whether cultural traits persist or transform over time.

- **Cross-generational and demographic factors:** Investigate how generational shifts (e.g., millennial vs. baby boomer managers) influence management practices. Younger Chinese managers may prioritize innovation over guanxi, while younger Korean managers might challenge strict hierarchy—potentially reshaping the core of each model. Research could also explore gender dynamics, as both countries face pressures to diversify leadership.
- **Triangular comparisons with other East Asian economies:** Expand the analysis to include Japan, Taiwan, or Southeast Asian nations (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia) to identify broader regional patterns. For example, how do Japanese "ringi" (consensus decision-making) compare to Chinese agility or Korean hierarchy? Such studies could refine theories of East Asian management as a dynamic, interconnected system.
- **Impact of geopolitical factors:** Examine how geopolitical tensions (e.g., U.S.-China tech rivalry, Korea-China trade disputes) reshape management models. Do Chinese firms reduce reliance on foreign technology due to geopolitical risks, and do Korean firms adjust ethical standards to align with global alliances? This could reveal how external pressures interact with cultural values.
- **Quantitative validation of comparative findings:** Use large-scale surveys or secondary data (e.g., corporate governance indices, ethics ratings, efficiency metrics) to quantify differences identified in this study. For example, statistical analysis could test whether Chinese firms indeed score lower on formal ethics metrics but higher on relational trust, or whether Korean firms outperform in R&D efficiency across industries.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

The management models of Chinese and Korean enterprises are not static products of culture but dynamic systems shaped by history, institutions, and global competition. This study underscores that there is no "superior" model—success lies in aligning cultural strengths with contextual demands. As East Asia continues to drive global economic growth, understanding the nuances of Sino-Korean management offers not only practical guidance for cross-border collaboration but also a broader lesson: cultural diversity within regional frameworks is a source of strength, not division. By embracing mutual learning, East Asian enterprises can redefine global management paradigms, blending tradition and innovation to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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