

## Paradoxical Leadership Behavior: Literature Review and Prospects

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### Abstract

This new type of leadership behavior is based on traditional Chinese yin and yang philosophical theory, which transcends the limitation of "either-or" from the perspective of power change and shifts to "both-and" to achieve the synergistic effect of integrating contradictions through paradoxical thinking. Paradoxical leadership behavior occurs when a leader uses seemingly competing but interrelated leadership behaviors designed to simultaneously meet competing demands at work. By introducing its conceptual origins and connotations and then sorting out its antecedents, outcome variables, and mechanism of action, this paper systematically compiles and reviews existing studies, constructs an overall framework for paradoxical leadership research and highlights directions for future research.

**Keywords:** Paradoxical Thoughts, Paradoxical Leadership Behavior, Paradoxical Leadership

### Introduction

In an increasingly complex and changing competitive environment, organizations inevitably face a variety of contradictions and conflicts, such as the contradiction between implementing change and maintaining stability and the conflict between short-term profitability and long-term sustainability (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). These seemingly contradictory needs are in fact interdependent, a phenomenon known as "paradox" (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and contradictions and paradoxes have become the "new normal" in current uncertain organizational environments (Putnam et al., 2016). Therefore, how leaders can effectively cope with these contradictions and tensions under environmental uncertainty is crucial for organizational survival and development, and has become a pressing issue for researchers and practitioners to address the key issues.

To address the problem, both the practical and theoretical communities are actively seeking solutions. In practice, Huawei has adopted a grayscale management approach to deal with organizational contradictions and tensions, i.e., abandoning the previous “black or white” management thinking and harmonizing seemingly opposing things (Wu Yajun, 2013), a paradoxical integration of management modes that is crucial to Huawei's building of a sustainable competitive advantage. In the theoretical world, scholars have introduced paradoxical thinking into leadership research (Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2012)(Smith et al., 2012; Smith, 2014), and proposed the concept of paradoxical leadership based on the traditional Chinese philosophical theory of yin and yang(Zhang et al., 2015).The classical Chinese concept of yin and yang served as the foundation for Zhang et al. (2015)'s initial proposal of paradoxical leadership behavior (PLB), which was based on these investigations. The proposal of this emerging leadership style responds to the call for a dialectical and unified view of leadership in the current environment and has received increasing attention from domestic and foreign researchers. Paradoxical leadership behavior (PLB) has undoubtedly become an important research topic in the field of leadership styles in the management environment of increasing dynamism and complexity (Zhang et al., 2015).

Research on paradoxical leadership behavior has made some progress, Existing studies have found that PLB can stimulate positive work behaviour, such as employee voice behavior (Li et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020), followership behaviors (Jia et al., 2018), individual ambidexterity (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016), employee engagement (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019), work engagement (Fürstenberg et al., 2021), bootlegging innovation (Huang et al., 2022; Jia et al., 2021), organisational citizenship behaviors (Meng et al., 2021; Pan, 2021; Ren & Yang, 2021), employee resilience (Franken et al., 2019) and so on. However, as a new type of leadership behavior rooted in traditional Chinese philosophical thinking, there is a lack of systematic reviews on this topic. In view of this, this paper conducts a systematic review and commentary on paradoxical leadership behavior-related research, summarizes and dissects the logical system of current research, constructs an overall framework for the research, and points out future research directions.

### **Literature Search and Screening**

The papers were searched in WOS and Scopus for academic titles, abstracts and keywords via the search terms “paradoxical leadership”, “paradoxical leader”, “paradox & leader” and “paradox & leadership”, respectively. “In addition, the literature citing the article “(Zhang et al., 2015)Zhang et al. (2015)” was further searched separately. The initial literature search was screened, and literature with little relevance to the leadership content was excluded, resulting in 114 relevant studies for further analysis.

On the basis of this, this paper first reviews the paradoxical ideas in organizational management and the concept of paradoxical leadership. Second, on the basis of the in-depth analysis of the 114 papers mentioned above, it summarizes the antecedents, effects and mechanisms of paradoxical leadership by combining the individual, team and organizational levels and constructing an integrated analytical framework. Finally, it summarizes the shortcomings of the existing studies and looks forward to future research directions in terms of conceptual and measurement refinement, the expansion and integration of paradoxical ideas into existing leadership studies, the mining of the intrinsic formation mechanism of paradoxical leadership, the enhancement of comparative studies in Western contexts as well

as cross-culturally, and further improvement and enrichment of the relevant research designs.

The contribution of this paper is to clarify the current status and lineage of paradoxical leadership behavior research rooted in traditional Chinese philosophical thought, its shortcomings and possible future research directions, with a view to drawing the attention of management researchers and the practice community to traditional Chinese thought, and to provide a reference for the subsequent deepening of research and practice in both Eastern and Western contexts.

### *The Definition of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

Existing studies generally agree that most of the core activities of organisations are embedded in paradoxes, such as standard versus flexible, control versus autonomy, closed versus open, etc. How to effectively cope with paradoxical phenomena to adapt to complex and changing environments has become an inescapable problem for enterprises; thus, PLB has emerged.

In the literature, scholars have defined paradoxical leadership from different perspectives. From a competency viewpoint, Rosing (2011) proposed that the ability to modify behavioral strategies in response to changes in the external environment is the fundamental competency of paradoxical leadership (Rosing et al., 2011). From the standpoint of the conflict between corporate social responsibility and performance, Smith et al. (2012) defined paradoxical leadership behavior as leadership behaviors that can resolve the conflict between social responsibility and performance by using the three meta-skills of integration, differentiation, and acceptance (Smith et al., 2012). (Smith et al., 2012). Lavine (2014) defined paradoxical leadership behavior on the basis of the competitive value model as leadership behavior that not only integrates normality and flexibility but also makes internal standardization compatible with the external dynamic environment (Lavine, 2014). Lewis (2014) also summarized paradoxical leadership behaviours through case studies. However, these explorations of the connotations of paradoxical leadership do not cover the numerous organisational paradoxes in organisations regarding centralization and decentralization, exploration and exploitation, efficiency and flexibility, etc (Lewis et al., 2014).

Zhang et al. (2015) used the Chinese Taoist philosophy of yin and yang as the analytical framework and defined paradoxical leadership behavior as a leadership style that can dialectically and systematically examine paradoxical phenomena in organizations, satisfy the dual competing needs of organizations and subordinates with seemingly antagonistic yet synergistic leadership behaviors to cope with the many dilemmas of organizations in complex environments, and refine five dimensions of paradoxical leadership behavior through exploratory factor analysis. The five dimensions of paradoxical leadership have been refined: treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individuality; maintaining egocentricity while caring for others; taking control of decision-making while allowing employees to make decisions on their own; stressing high standards in the work process while allowing flexibility; and maintaining a loose yet tight relationship with employees. Paradoxical leadership behaviours are, by their very nature, a set of systemic thinking patterns and dynamic synergistic approaches to resolving organisational contradictions and tensions (Zhang et al., 2015).

Zhang fully incorporates traditional Chinese culture, and in view of the sample of this study being China, Zhang's definition of PLB is more appropriate, and this study continues to follow Zhang's definition of PLB. Paradoxical leadership behavior (PLB) is seemingly competitive but interconnected to meet the competitive needs of organizations and employees in the workplace over time.

#### *The Antecedents of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

On the basis of the effectiveness of paradoxical leadership, academics have also performed more relevant empirical and theoretical research on the antecedents of paradoxical leadership. This is reflected in two main aspects: individual factors and situational factors.

Individual factors: Individuals who think holistically are more likely to find ways to coexist in the midst of contradictions to obtain the best of both worlds; thus, leaders who think holistically are more likely to utilize paradoxical management styles in the management process (Choi & Nisbett, 2000). The results of the empirical research also confirmed that leaders' holistic thinking and integrated complexity cognitive traits have a positive impact on leaders' performance of paradoxical leadership behaviors in the work process (Zhang et al., 2015). Through empirical research, Ishaq and Bashir et al. (2019) demonstrated that while agreeableness, dutifulness, and neuroticism are negatively correlated with paradoxical leadership behavior, extraversion and openness to experience traits have a positive association with such behavior (Ishaq et al., 2019).

Situational factors, a study suggested that organically structured organizations place more emphasis on intra- and interdepartmental cooperation than mechanistic organizational structures do, that more complex and contradictory issues arise in organically structured systems, and that leaders of organically structured organizations are therefore more likely to adopt a paradoxical approach to leadership (Zhang et al., 2015). The authors argued that environmental uncertainty may have more complex social relationships and that the dynamic changes and complexity of the external environment may also increase paradoxical problems for leaders; however, the effect of environmental uncertainty on paradoxical leadership behavior remains at the level of theoretical exploration, and the relationship between environmental uncertainty and paradoxical leadership needs to be further empirically investigated (Zhang & Han, 2019).

#### *The Impact of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

The current academic discussion of the effects of PLB roles revolves around the positive effects on employees, teams and organizations, as well as a small number of the negative impacts of PLB.

#### *The Positive Impact of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

The effectiveness of PLB as an indigenous leadership type and leadership style in the Chinese cultural context has been widely confirmed by scholars (Tang, 2015), which is able to positively influence the role of employees, teams, and organizations (Jing, 2020; Luo, 2023; Yuan, 2019; Zhou, 2022).

From an individual-level perspective, in terms of employee work behaviour, PLB can stimulate positive work behaviour. (1) Employee voice behavior and followership behavior: Researchers

have demonstrated that PLB behavior uses psychological safety and self-efficacy to encourage staff members to adopt voice conduct; a study also empirically revealed that when leaders adopt paradoxical voice behavior (Li et al., 2020). A study revealed that enhancing employees' psychological safety motivates them to adopt facilitative promotive voice behavior and reduce prohibitive voice behavior (Xue et al., 2020). According to one study, PLB helps to effectively integrate and explain conflicting social messages to subordinates, which in turn motivates subordinates' followership behavior (Jia et al., 2018). (2) Individual ambidexterity: Researchers found that when group leaders exhibit PLB, employees exhibit more ambidexterity (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016). (3) Employee engagement and work engagement: Research has shown that PLB in the hospitality industry has a positive effect on employees' psychological empowerment and further enhances employee engagement (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). Drawing on the job demand-resource model, it is proposed that PLB promotes subordinate work engagement by simultaneously fostering follower goal clarity and work autonomy (Fürstenberg et al., 2021). (4) Bootlegging innovation: PLB is explored as a way to stimulate bootlegging behaviours in employees through harmonious innovation passion and role breadth self-efficacy (Jia et al., 2021). The findings show that employees' bootlegging conduct is significantly and favorably impacted by paradoxical leadership. Additionally, employees' bootlegging conduct and paradoxical leadership are partially mediated by psychological capital and prospering at work, and the two are partially mediated by chain mediating (Huang et al., 2022). (5) Organisational citizenship behaviours: The results of the study revealed that PLB enhances employees' overall justice and thereby stimulates employees' organisational citizenship behaviours (Ren & Yang, 2021). Scholars have also argued that PLB has a positive effect on employees' organisational citizenship behaviour (Meng et al., 2021). According to empirical research, PLB improves employees' OCB by fostering a paradoxical attitude and a personal service orientation (Pan, 2021). (6) Employee resilience: A study of public service workers revealed that PLB contributes to employee resilience (Franken et al., 2019).

In terms of employee creativity, more studies have shown that PLB has a positive effect on employee creativity. Shao and Njstad et al. (2019) argued that PLB stimulates employee creativity by enhancing employees' creative self-efficacy (Shao et al., 2019). A study based on self-determination theory revealed that PLB enhances employees' creativity by increasing their sense of work prosperity (Yang et al., 2019). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that PLB encourages individual creative behaviors by fostering individual role participation (Dashuai & Bin, 2020). A survey of 358 workers in China revealed that PLB encourages knowledge exchange, which in turn encourages exploratory innovation (Deng et al., 2023). Prohibiting knowledge-hiding behavior can improve knowledge sharing among staff members, which encourages innovation among staff members (Devi, 2023). Employee proactive and reactive innovation behavior are positively correlated with PLB, and both regulated and autonomous work motivation operate as mediators (Luo et al., 2023). There is a positive correlation between PLB and employees' harmonious work passion. Furthermore, harmonious work passion is positively correlated with employee creativity (Lin et al., 2024). According to an empirical analysis of 306 senior or midlevel managers with experience in innovation in Chinese high-tech companies, paradoxical leadership was positively correlated with both exploitative and exploratory innovation. (Yi et al., 2019).

In terms of job performance, PLB improves workers' performance on the workplace. Employees' leadership identification and PL were found to be favorably connected, which enhanced their service performance (She et al., 2020). From the meaning-making perspective, it is argued that PLB enhances employee task performance by increasing employee adaptability (Zhang et al., 2021). PLB and leaders' task performance are positively correlated, and the relationship between PLB and leaders' task performance is mediated by job crafting (S. Chen et al., 2021). Sparr and Knippenberg et al. (2022) reported that PLB enhances employees' adaptive and proactive performance (Sparr et al., 2022). Scholars have also reported that employees' adaptive performance is positively related to their PLB (Tan et al., 2024).

Moreover, other relevant empirical findings also show that PLB has a positive effect on stimulating employees' proactive behaviour (Rescalvo-Martin et al., 2021), individuals' followership behaviours (Jia et al., 2018) and employees taking charge (Feng et al., 2022). The above analysis reveals that PLB has a positive effect on employees' attitudes, behaviours and performance at the individual level, and many related theoretical research results exist.

From a team-level perspective, related studies have shown that PLB also has a positive effect on teams. Luo Jinlian and Hu Wen'an et al. (2017) showed through empirical research that PLB can effectively enhance team dynamics and thus promote team innovation behaviour (Jing, 2017); Peng Wei and Ma Yue (2018) concluded that PLB can establish the strength of internal team network ties and the strength of external team network ties, thus positively affecting team creativity (Peng Wei, 2018). Ren and Zhu (2020) reported that PLB promotes team innovation through team coordination (Dashuai & Bin, 2020). Li Jinsheng and Era (2021) empirically showed that PLB indirectly promotes team innovation performance through failure learning, whereas technological turbulence negatively moderates the relationship between failure learning and team innovation performance (Li Jinsheng, 2021). PLB has a significant positive effect on group harmony. Group harmony mediates the positive effects of ambivalent leadership on team performance and employees' organisational citizenship behaviours, as well as the negative effects of ambivalent leadership on employees counterproductive work behaviours (Zhang, 2024).

From an organizational level perspective, Zhang et al. (2017) concluded that PLB positively contributes to firm innovation performance through an empirical study of middle and senior managers (Zhang et al., 2017). Using responses from 276 business unit-level and performance archival data from the Taiwan Economic Journal database, we find that business unit-level corporate entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between business unit-level paradoxical leadership and business unit-level performance. Firm-level guanxi HRD practices diminish this effect and turn the positive relationship between business unit-level paradoxical leadership and BU-level performance through business unit-level CE negative (Chang et al., 2024).

### *The Negative Impact of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

As PLB is based on the integration and sublimation of contradictory opposites and the need for leaders to have strong behavioral competence, paradoxical leadership behavior has contradictory attributes and characteristics. The adaptive capacity of lower-level employees, to a certain extent, will produce cognitive and sensory illusions and ambiguity; if paradoxical

leadership behavior is not handled in an appropriate manner and method, there are also certain negative effects (Zhu Yingjun, 2019). Al and Abdulhassan (2020) reported that paradoxical leader behaviours have a significant effect on workplace exclusion and organisational inertia and that when an organization's leader exhibits paradoxical behaviours, it triggers employee exclusion from the workplace, which leads to organisational inertia in the work environment (Hasnawi & Abbas, 2020). Yao, Yanhong, and Ji, Fanqi (2021) also argued that high levels of paradoxical thinking can easily lead to cognitive overload, leaving individuals with no time to focus on creative activities that require imagination and inspiration and that excessive paradoxical thinking reduces the efficiency of employees' learning and thus diminishes their creativity (Yanhong YAO, 2021). Zhang and Law et al. (2022), on the basis of meaning maintenance theory, argued that PLB causes some employees to feel subjectively ambivalent and that employees with low integration thinking perceive greater psychological ambivalence (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Scholars have reported that PLB reduces followers' WFC and that workplace anxiety and job crafting mediate the PLB-WFC relationship in different ways. In addition, resilience moderated the effects of PLB on job anxiety and job crafting. Specifically, when resilience is high, followers experience lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of job crafting (Bao & Yang, 2024).

### **The Mechanism of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior**

#### *The Mediating Variables of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

The investigation of the underlying mechanisms, which may be considered a "black box," has been the subject of increased attention due to the employment of a variety of theoretical rationales. Our review has identified individual-level mediating mechanisms that exert greater influence than those at the team and organisational levels do. (1) Individual levels include subjective ambivalence, intrinsic motivation, legitimate power, individual ambidexterity, individual ambidexterity, team ambidexterity, thriving at work, change readiness, leader identification, creative self-efficacy, paradoxical mindset, paradoxical mindset, perceived error management culture, harmonious innovation passion, role breadth self-efficacy, goal clarity, work autonomy, work engagement, paradox mindset and role stress, harmonious work passion, workplace anxiety and job crafting, project agility, role ambiguity and follower engagement in paradoxical tasks. (2) Team level includes team ambidexterity and group harmony. (3) The organizational level includes perceived organizational support, a perceived error management culture, organizational goal ambiguity, organizational identification and corporate entrepreneurship.

From an individual-level According to the findings of a survey conducted among 139 supervisor-employee dyads in four Chinese companies, paradoxical leader behavior fosters employee creativity through the mediating influence of thriving at work (Yang et al., 2019). A total of 252 employee-supervisor dyads were included in the study. The results demonstrated that, when both workload pressure and integrative complexity were at their highest levels, creative self-efficacy was the most effective method for promoting employee creativity (Shao et al., 2019). Hierarchical linear modelling revealed a positive correlation between paradoxical leadership and employees' leader identification, which in turn led to an improvement in their service performance (She et al., 2020). The results demonstrate that a paradoxical mindset plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between paradoxical leadership and OCB. The results also show that the association between OCB and paradoxical leadership is considerably mediated by a personal service orientation. Additionally, the findings imply that

the relationship between paradoxical leadership and employees' OCB is serially mediated by both a paradoxical worldview and a personal service orientation (Pan, 2021). This study provides a theoretical framework based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) to elucidate the mechanisms through which paradoxical leadership fosters bootlegging. These results show that paradoxical leadership improves workers' perceived error management culture, role breadth, self-efficacy, and harmonious innovation desire (Jia et al., 2021). The findings show that PLB and two important variables-follower goal clarity and job autonomy-are positively correlated. Additionally, the results show that PLB indirectly affects work engagement by influencing these two factors. (Fürstenberg et al., 2021). Role ambiguity fully mediates the relationship between paradoxical leadership and perceived performance (Backhaus et al., 2021).

For those with a low (high) holistic thinking style, Subjective ambivalence is more (less) positively correlated with PLB, while creativity is more (less) correlated with ambivalence (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). The perception of legitimate power and intrinsic motivation among employees is found to be positively correlated with PLB. Moreover, these two factors are linked to standard performance and proactive behaviour, respectively, and collectively exert a significant influence on employee creativity (Zhang & Liu, 2022). The study indicated that PLB exerts a beneficial indirect influence on individual innovation within teams, operating through the conduit of individual ambidexterity. Additionally, our results show that PLB, through team ambidexterity, also positively influences team innovation indirectly (M. J. Zhang et al., 2022). The findings of our study corroborate the positive correlations between PLB and adaptive and proactive performance via change readiness. This lends further support to the view that leaders' ability to articulate and disseminate their understanding of paradoxes is a crucial factor in fostering followers' change-oriented attitudes and performance (Sparr et al., 2022). According to the 317 samples gathered from the three-wave survey conducted in China, PLB reduces employee creativity through job ambiguity during the hindering process while boosting it during the motivating process through creative self-efficacy (Geng et al., 2022)

The findings of this study suggest that the impact of PLB on a follower's paradox mindset is entirely mediated by the follower's engagement in paradoxical tasks (Boemelburg et al., 2023). The authors discovered that PLB exerts a direct and indirect influence on employee performance, encompassing both in-role (job performance) and extrarole (innovative work behavior and voice behavior) aspects. This influence is mediated by employee work engagement (Kundi et al., 2023). Employee paradox attitude and role stress act as partial mediators in the association between PLB and employee adaptive performance (Tan et al., 2024). According to the results of a recent study, PLB and employee creativity are mediated by harmonious work enthusiasm (Lin et al., 2024). The results showed that PLB was linked to a decrease in followers' WFC. Additionally, job crafting and workplace anxiety, which have different impacts, modulate the association between PLB and WFC (Bao & Yang, 2024). The results showed that PLB was linked to a decrease in followers' WFC. Additionally, job crafting and workplace anxiety, which have different impacts, modulate the association between PLB and WFC (Zaman et al., 2024).

From a team-level perspective, the results show that PLB has a positive indirect link with team innovation through team ambidexterity and a positive indirect influence on team members'

individual invention through individual ambidexterity (Zhang et al., 2022). The positive impact of PLB on team performance and employees' organisational citizenship behaviour is mediated by group harmony, whereas the negative impact on employees' counterproductive work behaviour is also moderated by group harmony (Zhang, 2024).

From an organizational-level perspective, the impact of PLB facets on employee resilience is partially mediated by perceptions of organisational support (Franken et al., 2019). The results showed that PLB improves workers' perceived error management culture, role breadth, self-efficacy, and harmonious innovation desire (Jia et al., 2021). The findings of the mediation analyses show that, in addition to PLB's direct effects on work engagement and job satisfaction, there are also notable indirect effects through role and organizational goal ambiguity (Backhaus et al., 2021). Organizational identification acts as a partial mediator in the link between PLB and turnover intention (Lo et al., 2023). The current study found that the association between business unit-level PLB and business unit-level performance is mediated by corporate entrepreneurship at the business unit level (Chang et al., 2024).

#### *Moderating Variables of Paradoxical Leadership Behavior*

In addition to exploring the mediating mechanisms of PLB on outcomes, established studies have introduced different moderating variables to further explore the boundary conditions under which PLB works, specifically, individual difference variables (core self-evaluation, resilience, psychological safety, employee gender-role identity (GRI), proactive personality, employee need for cognitive closure, holistic thinking, zhong yong thinking and employees' organizational identification, leader vision, intelligence and trait emotions on leader behavior, employee gender-role identity (GRI), job complexity and cognitive flexibility, resilience, career resilience, follower mindfulness, and emotional intelligence) and work context variables (structural uncertainty and job-related uncertainty, firm-level Guanxi HRD practices, intragroup conflict (relationship conflict and task conflict), workload pressure, integrative complexity, job complexity and cognitive flexibility, procedural fairness, environmental dynamism, promotion focus, entrepreneurial bricolage, task complexity, leader-member exchange differentiation, collectivism and the work environment).

The individual difference variable's findings showed that psychological safety enhances the favorable correlation between employee creativity and thriving at work (Yang et al., 2019). The association between PLB and leader identification is moderated by the degree of an employee's need for cognitive closure; for individuals with a lower need for cognitive closure, paradoxical leadership has a greater favorable impact on leader identification (She et al., 2020). Higher levels of Zhong Yong thinking and organizational identification among staff members increase the effectiveness of PLB (Zhang et al., 2021). Both the indirect impact of career resilience on task performance through job crafting and the positive moderating effect of career resilience on the connection between PLB and job crafting were noted (Chen et al., 2021).

Subjective ambivalence is more (less) positively correlated with PLB for low (high) holistic thinkers, and ambivalence is more (less) correlated with creativity (Zhang et al., 2022). The findings additionally indicate that the influence of PLB is amplified when the leader exhibits robust vision. This phenomenon is observed to enhance the effects of paradoxical leadership on both team and individual ambidexterity, as well as on innovative outcomes (Zhang et al.,

2022). PLB is more (less) positively correlated with subjective ambivalence and ambivalence is more (less) correlated with creativity for low (high) holistic thinkers (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). The concept of core self-evaluation has been demonstrated to facilitate positive adjustment in the relationship between PLB and harmonious work passion (Li & Ding, 2022). Through creative self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility and job complexity can amplify the favorable effects of PLB on employee creativity. On the other hand, through role ambiguity, cognitive flexibility can mitigate the detrimental effects of PLB on worker innovation (Geng et al., 2022). It has been shown that follower mindfulness has a moderating effect on the impact of PLB on supervisor-subordinate guanxi and on the way that supervisor-subordinate guanxi mediates the primary effect (He & Yun, 2022). The findings show that PLB's effect on organizational identity is enhanced by emotional intelligence. Additionally, when emotional intelligence is high, PLB has a stronger indirect impact on turnover intentions through organizational identity (Lo et al., 2023).

The moderating effect of resilience on the relationships between PLB and workplace anxiety and job crafting was significant. Specifically, when resilience is high, followers exhibit lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of job crafting (Bao & Yang, 2024). Resilience mitigated the impacts of PLB on job crafting and workplace anxiety. In particular, followers show less anxiety and increased job crafting when resilience is high (Bao & Yang, 2024). Gender-role identity (GRI) moderates the indirect effects of PLB on employee adaptation performance through role stress and paradigm shift (Tan et al., 2024). Employee gender roles can moderate the indirect impacts of PLB on adaptive performance through job stress and employee paradox attitude (Tan et al., 2024). The association between PLB and happy job passion is moderated by an individual's proactive personality. A proactive personality moderates the indirect impact of harmonious work enthusiasm on the link between PLB and employee creativity (Lin et al., 2024). Resilience significantly moderated the associations between PLB and job crafting and workplace anxiety. In particular, followers who are resilient show higher levels of job crafting and lower levels of worry (Bao & Yang, 2024).

In terms of work context variables, the study's conclusions, which are based on data from 252 employee-supervisor dyads, show that when workload pressure and integrative complexity were both high, the employees' creative self-efficacy method was most successful in encouraging employee creativity. However, when workload pressure was low or when workload pressure was high and integrative complexity was low, PLB was less effective in fostering employees' creative self-efficacy and creativity (Shao et al., 2019).

Procedural fairness moderates the relationship between positive employee affect and OCB, and this positive relationship is strengthened under conditions of high procedural fairness. Procedural fairness moderates the mediating effect of positive affect on the relationship between PLB and employee OCB (Silu Chen et al., 2021). TOne important element in this situation is the moderating function of leadership member exchange in distinguishing between PLB and the impression of job pressure (Meng et al., 2021).

The positive impact of PLB on employee creativity can be magnified by cognitive flexibility and job complexity via creative self-efficacy. Conversely, cognitive flexibility can serve to buffer the negative impact of PLB on employee creativity via role ambiguity (Geng et al., 2022). This study investigates the moderating effect of collectivism in the relationship between

psychological entitlement and paradoxical leadership. The association between paradoxical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior is negatively mediated by psychological entitlement (Niu et al., 2022). The findings showed that role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) acted as a mediator between PLB and a higher likelihood of employees taking on a more proactive role. Additionally, promotion focus moderates the mediation relationship; the stronger the link, the more promotion-focused the subordinates are (Feng et al., 2022). PLB, sustainable performance, and the adoption of smart technology are all considerably influenced by entrepreneurial bricolage (Hossain et al., 2022). Crucially, task complexity affects the association between PLB and creative self-efficacy. As a result, the mediated relationship proved effective when the task complexity was high (Jung et al., 2022).

Both the direct and indirect effects of PLB on healthy debate within a team are lessened when relationship conflict exists inside the team. On the other hand, task conflict within a team does not enhance the effect, either directly or indirectly. Implications for both theory and practice are discussed (Wei et al., 2023). The findings of the study indicated that environmental dynamism exerts a detrimental moderating influence on the relationship between employee knowledge sharing and exploratory innovation (Deng et al., 2023). This study examined the influence of the work environment on the positive effects of perceived organisational support on both work engagement and employee voice behaviour (Shehata et al., 2023). TStructural uncertainty is observed to negatively affect the link between PLB and leader effectiveness. This implied that when there is structural ambiguity in the organizational structure, a leader's effectiveness is reduced. However, the authors find that job-related uncertainty has a positive moderating influence on the connection between PL and leader effectiveness (Batool et al., 2023).

Guanxi HRD activities at the firm level reduce this effect and make the positive correlation between success at the business unit level and paradoxical leadership at the business unit level through corporate entrepreneurship at the business unit level negative (Chang et al., 2024).

## **Overview**

Through an in-depth examination of the literature, although the connotations, dimensions and measurements of PLB have been preliminarily defined and scholars' theoretical and empirical explorations have achieved some key results, the research on this topic is still in its infancy, the research results are relatively dispersed, and a systematic analytical framework for effectively integrating and expanding the existing research results is lacking. Therefore, this thesis extracts an integrated analytical framework from the aspects of paradoxical leadership effects, mediating variables and moderating variables; combines individual, team and organisational levels, as shown in Figure 2.3; and reviews the existing research results, hoping to provide a holistic direction for the future research expansion of paradoxical leadership.

Although the current research has yielded several results, the review revealed that the following shortcomings still exist in the research on this topic: first, there is still room for further refinement of the concept and measurement of paradoxical leadership; second, most of the previous studies have focused on the study of paradoxical leadership role effects, neglecting to explore the causes; third, the role effects of paradoxical leadership on team

outputs have been inconsistent; and fourth, there are deficiencies in the research design of the existing studies. The vast majority of existing studies have explored the effectiveness of paradoxical leadership in Eastern contexts, while a small number of studies in Western contexts have reached inconsistent conclusions. Fourth, existing studies have deficiencies in terms of research design, such as more studies based on cross-sectional data and fewer longitudinal and qualitative studies. The theme of paradoxical leadership in its developmental stage needs to be further explored.

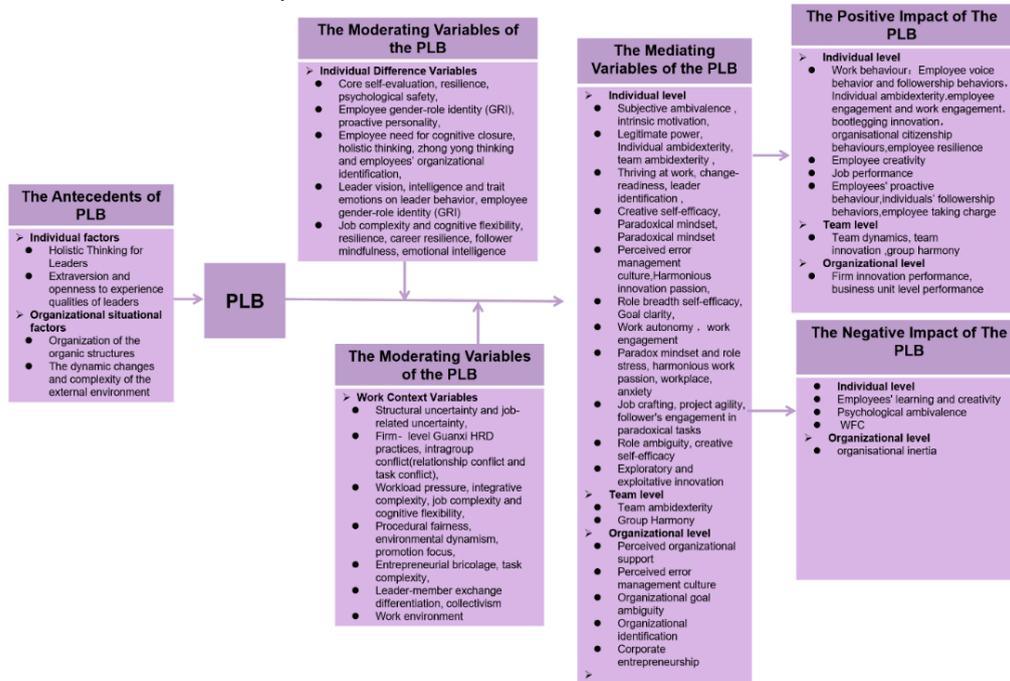


Figure 2. 1 An integrative analytical framework for the current state of PL research

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