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A collection of papers on

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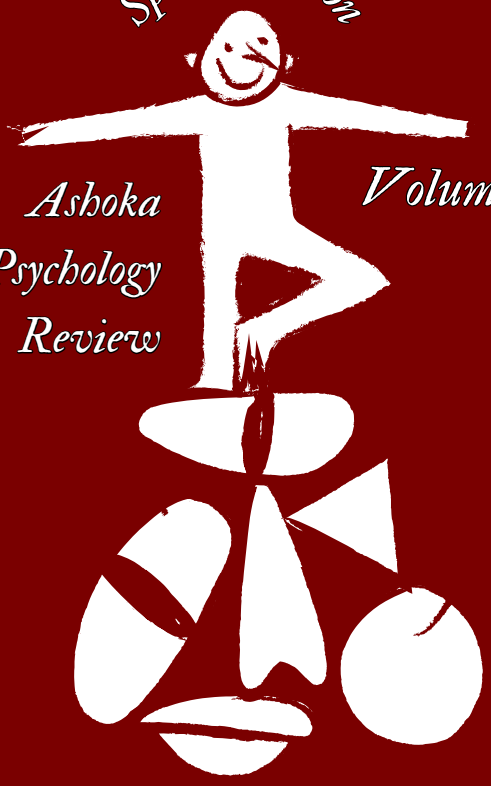

Ashoka Psychology Review

Volume II

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A Note by the Editor-in-Chief

This issue of the *Ashoka Psychology Review* features four papers that engage with questions of culture, power, and psychological experience across organizational and social contexts. Together, the submissions examine how cultural norms and structures shape leadership practices, moral reasoning, and self-concept across different national settings.

Two of the papers focus on leadership in cross-cultural organizational environments, particularly the adaptation of Indian leadership styles within Anglo-American contexts. Drawing on established frameworks in organizational psychology, these contributions explore culturally contingent leadership, participative decision-making, and relational approaches to leadership, with attention to their implications for employee well-being, trust, and team functioning.

The remaining papers address themes in cross-cultural psychology. One examines how variations in power distance influence moral reasoning in children, comparing high and low power distance societies to highlight the role of hierarchy and authority in moral judgment. The other explores cultural tightness–looseness and self-concept clarity, comparing India and Canada to understand how norm enforcement and behavioral flexibility shape identity coherence and psychological well-being.

These papers were not peer-reviewed by the editors of the Review Department of the Psychology Society of Ashoka. They were evaluated and graded as part of coursework in *Cross-Cultural Psychology* [PSY-6057-1] and *Organizational Psychology* [PSY-3065/ENT-3017-1], taught by Professor Mary Jane Arneaud. All four submissions received the highest grade awarded in their respective courses and have been included in this issue in recognition of their academic rigor and quality of scholarship.

Srishti Upendra
Editor-in-Chief
Ashoka Psychology Review: Special Edition, Volume II

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ACADEMIC PAPERS:

Cultural Tightness-Looseness and Self-Concept Clarity: A Comparison of India and Canada

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Professor Mary Jane Arneaud

ASHOKA PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW

The Role of Power Distance in Shaping Moral Reasoning: India versus Sweden

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Introduction

Although moral reasoning, the process by which individuals evaluate what is right and wrong, has often been examined through the lens of individualism versus collectivism, far less attention has been given to power distance, the cultural dimension that highlights how hierarchy and authority shape social behaviour (Hofstede, 2011). While Western groups prioritise justice and individual rights, Eastern groups often emphasise obligations to authority and the preservation of social harmony (Bentahila et al., 2021). This paper moves beyond the individualism versus collectivism framework by examining how power distance relates to moral reasoning by comparing India and Sweden, two cultures positioned at opposite ends of the power distance index (PDI).

Power Distance and Moral Reasoning

Power distance, the degree to which people in a society accept and agree with the unequal distribution of power, is a cultural force that shows low power distance cultures as expecting power to be earned, and high power distance cultures as accepting hierarchy as a natural norm (Hofstede, 2011). India, with a PDI of 77, reflects a culture emphasising obedience to authority and respect for elders, whereas Sweden, at a PDI of 31 (Figure 1; Traquandi, 2016), represents a low power distance culture that rejects hierarchical structures (Nordstrom, 2010).

Moral reasoning refers to the thought process behind moral judgments and the values used to justify them. Kohlberg's framework outlines three stages of moral development, illustrating how children move from judging right and wrong based on consequences or obedience to authority and then progress to articulating their own moral values and principles beyond social expectations (Kohlberg, 1971). These stages show how moral reasoning progresses from obedience and social harmony toward autonomous principles. Building on this framework, research in non-Western contexts has explored how cultural values and collective orientations influence the way children reason about morality.

Pandya and colleagues (2021) studied moral reasoning in India through 144 children from Vadodara, Gujarat. Findings showed how early adolescents relied more on a sense of social harmony and obligations to one's social group, often drawing from indigenous concepts like faraj (obligation) and zimmedari (responsibility) (Pandya et al., 2021). Adolescents viewed their membership in their communities as an obligation to care for others around them, like a moral duty. Younger children were seen referring to God and punishment, and adolescents invoked the concept of paap (sin) to frame violations. These results highlight a possible Indian cultural belief that frames morality in terms of religious duty. Additionally, a commonality across groups showed the importance of family and friends in moral reasoning (Figure 2; Pandya et al., 2021).
Overall, Indian children's moral reasoning is shaped not only by age and class but also by cultural norms of duty, authority, and spirituality. It can be argued that due to the high power distance in India, moral development is influenced by high hierarchical dependency, where respect for authority and adherence to social obligations become central to children's understanding of morality.

Thornberg and colleagues (2014) examined the judgments of 307 elementary school children in Sweden through their reasoning regarding school transgressions, observed through behaviours regarding bullying, within hypothetical school scenarios where explicit rules to regulate these behaviours had been removed. Moral reasoning was assessed through the students' justifications, which included the effects the incidents had on others and moral values such as fairness and harm. Findings revealed that children upheld moral standards even in the absence of rules. This outcome shows that Swedish children distinguished morality from social convention, basing their judgements of transgressions, like bullying, on the inherent harm actions can cause (Thornberg et al., 2014).

The Significance of Cross-Cultural Comparison

Examining moral reasoning through power distance in India and Sweden highlights cultural contexts that are both distinct and underexplored. India's large youth population and ingrained

hierarchies shape children's judgements through duty, respect for authority, and obedience, making moral reasoning central to the social community. Sweden, by contrast, represents a low power distance context where egalitarianism and welfare structures encourage children to value fairness and autonomy. Comparing these two cultures highlights how opposite ends of the PDI could shape children's moral reasoning.

Conclusion

Findings from the above studies showcase that moral reasoning in children reflects the values of their societies. Indian children framed morality in terms of duty and hierarchical obedience, while for Swedish children, morality is not dependent on external authority but on internalised principles of fairness and equality. This indicates that power distance moderates moral reasoning, influencing whether children conceptualise right and wrong in terms of autonomy or hierarchy. The significance of this comparison allows research to move beyond commonly studied frameworks and shows how cultural groups can alter one's moral growth, underscoring the importance of cultural forces like power distance in understanding children's moral development.

AI Contribution Statement

While writing this paper, I used ChatGPT on 29 September 2025 to help me understand Kohlberg's stages of moral development. I uploaded the prompt: "Explain the three stages of moral reasoning and development by Kohlberg with examples." The response gave me examples that helped me grasp the distinction between the stages, but none of the text was copied into the paper; instead, I used this understanding to make links to the topic of power distance, which can be seen in Paragraph 3, sentence: "These stages show how moral reasoning progresses from obedience and social harmony toward autonomous principles."

Lastly, on 2 October 2025, I used ChatGPT for minor title edits due to exceeding the word count. The prompt I used was: "Give me suggestions for a heading to replace 'The Significance of Studying Power Distance and Moral Reasoning in India and Sweden' that is shorter." The response I received was: "Here are some shorter alternatives you could use for that heading: Why India and Sweden?, The Case of India and Sweden, Cultural Relevance, Contextual Importance." None of the suggestions were used verbatim, and only a combination I created was used, which can be seen above Paragraph 7, titled 'The Significance of Cross-Cultural Comparison'. No other AI tools were used in writing this paper.

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Professor Mary Jane Arneaud

ASHOKA PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW

Culturally Contingent Leadership: Adapting Indian Leadership for the United States

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Introduction

It is important for managers to be effective leaders, as they are known to have more impact on an employee's mental well-being than a doctor or therapist (Brower, 2024). When managers and employees come from different cultural contexts, leadership style differences might cause stress due to differences in ways of working, affecting work efficiency. If leading across cultural contexts, the leader must develop a culturally contingent approach to leadership, modifying behaviour to fit local expectations to guide a highly functional team (Javidan et al., 2006).

Leadership Across English-speaking and Southern Asian Contexts

I will examine the case of an Indian expatriate executive, leading a team of local employees in the United States (US). According to the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project, USA is part of the Anglo cluster, where effective leadership is associated with participative and value-based behaviours. In contrast, India is part of the Southern Asian cluster, where self-protective and less participative leadership is more common (Javidan et al., 2006). By understanding the differences between the two leadership clusters, I will provide a roadmap for the Indian leader to employ a culturally contingent leadership.

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) Project

The GLOBE project is a large-scale research initiative exploring leadership differences across cultures. 170 researchers analysed cultural values, workplace practices and leadership traits across 62 societies (Javidan et al. 2006). The societies were grouped into ten culture clusters with nine cultural dimensions distinguishing cultural practices and values influencing leadership and management (Javidan et al., 2006).

Using a 112-item leadership questionnaire, researchers identified six culture specific leadership profiles based on shared beliefs about outstanding leadership attributes in cultural groups that either enhance or inhibit outstanding leadership, proposing the *Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theory* (CLT) (Javidan et al., 2006). The CLT leadership dimensions on which are most relevant to the Southern Asian and Anglo clusters are participative and self-protective leadership. Participative leadership, which is more highly valued in the Anglo than the SA cluster, reflects the extent to which managers involve employees in decision making and implementation, aiming for collaboration and shared responsibility (Javidan et al., 2006). This style is highly valued in the Anglo cluster, where leaders are expected to consult and empower their teams. In contrast, self-protective leadership, characterised by face-saving and self-centred behaviours, is more accepted in the Southern Asian cluster but is seen as impeding outstanding leadership in Anglo contexts (Javidan et al., 2006). Therefore, Indian leaders in the USA should emphasise participative behaviours and minimise self-protective tendencies in leadership.

When in the United States of America

When preparing to lead a U.S. team, the Indian expatriate leader should first assess the company's work–family culture to determine the extent of organizational support for employee well-being initiatives and the latitude for participative decision-making. Indian norms emphasize hierarchical respect and indirect communication. On the other hand, American workplaces value direct dialogue and shared decision-making. The Indian expat manager can, therefore, adapt by drawing on *leader-member exchange* (LMX) theory, which details that through trust-based social exchanges, manager–employee relationships can be developed in which leaders provide support and employees respond with greater commitment and performance (Major & Lauzun, 2010).

In practice, this includes engaging in frequent one-on-one conversations to build trust while the relationship develops, negotiating personalized work arrangements known as *idiosyncratic deals (i-deals)*. In practice, this can be reflected by flexibility in schedules or paid leave for important life or cultural events to align organizational resources with individual employee needs (Major & Lauzun, 2010). Indian leaders often build rapport by asking about employees' families, demonstrating culturally-appropriate care. However, in the U.S., initial personal boundaries are tighter,

requiring a measured approach to avoid seeming intrusive. By combining cultural sensitivity with LMX training-based relationship building, the expatriate manager can begin the transition from Indian to American workplace norms.

Transitioning from a traditionally self-protective style deeply ingrained in Indian culture, where preserving hierarchical authority and face-saving often limit transparency, the expatriate might consider becoming an affective hub, an informal but vital connector who cultivates trust, for example by being authentic, across teams through likability (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005). For instance, while Indian leaders may avoid admitting mistakes publicly to preserve status, the U.S. culture appreciates leaders sharing setbacks openly as learning opportunities. The Indian leader might start team meetings by honestly discussing project hurdles, inviting input to co-create solutions. Sharing setbacks openly and, for example, reframing apologies as collective learning opportunities can promote psychological safety, alleviate fear of blame, and lower stress among U.S. employees who rely on horizontal feedback loops (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005).

The leader should actively promote informal pre-project sessions called peer assist sessions to build familiarity beyond formal roles, which is essential in culturally diverse U.S. teams. Using 360-degree feedback to identify multiple affective hubs enables strategic positioning of social facilitators, minimizing isolation risks often faced by multinational teams. Additionally, publicly acknowledging employee contributions and highlighting participative decision-making promotes trust and addresses the Anglo-American aversion to face-saving behaviours. However, leaders must be cautious to maintain clarity and decisiveness, as excessive consultation may slow decision-making or be perceived as lack of authority in fast-paced work environments. By authentically practicing these leadership behaviours, the Indian expatriate can bridge cultural divides, improve team unity and be perceived as an outstanding leader in the U.S. multinational environment.

Conclusion

To successfully lead in the United States, Indian expatriate managers should integrate participative and non–self-protective leadership by openly negotiating with employees on their expectations of work-life balance, mutual accountability, respect, and collaboration. Exhibiting genuine care and empathy, managers should support employees' needs to build trust, improve well-being, and ensure high performance. By practicing culturally contingent leadership behaviors, managers can navigate the Anglo workplace successfully and build cohesive, productive teams.

AI Contribution Statements

In writing this paper, I used ChatGPT on September 24, 2025, to help me better understand the concept of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory and its application to workplace dynamics. I used the following prompt: "Explain Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory in organizational psychology with examples." On the same date, I also asked: "How can LMX be applied in cross-cultural contexts, especially between Indian and American managers and employees?" The generated text was not copied verbatim; instead, I paraphrased the explanations and incorporated the ideas into the section 'When in the United States of America.' I supplemented this with academic readings and cited sources (e.g., Major & Lauzun, 2010).

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Professor Mary Jane Arneaud

ASHOKA PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW

From India to the US: Practicing Culturally Contingent Leadership in Organisations

Rashee

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Introduction

Leaders are the pillars that support an organisation's most essential strength- its employees. Company leaders have a significant impact on their employees' well-being, more so than their therapist or doctor (Kitterman, 2024). The magnitude of this influence calls for global leaders, or those leading across nations, to make active efforts to adapt to different cultural contexts (or be culturally contingent), as what works in one culture may simply be irrelevant or even harmful in another (Javidan et al., 2006). To illustrate this, I use the example of an Indian expatriate executive in the US with a team of local employees, drawing on data from the Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Project.

Findings from the GLOBE Project

GLOBE researchers studied 62 societies and identified nine dimensions common across their cultures (Javidan et al., 2006). They also outlined six global leadership attributes that distinguish desired leadership qualities across cultures, known as *culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory* (CLT) profiles (Javidan et al., 2006).

One of the CLT profiles, self-protective leadership, is characterised by being self-centered and face-saving, and it was found to be higher among Indians than Americans (Javidan et al., 2006). This may be due to the large power distance (i.e., the acceptance of hierarchical authority) in India, in contrast to the US, where safeguarding one's own interests out of concern for status consciousness is frowned upon.

India and the US also differed in the degree to which leaders involve others in making and implementing decisions, or being participative. According to Javidan et al. (2006), Americans rank participative leadership as more important than Indians do. And so, an Indian expat leader in the US should, therefore, be wary of excluding stakeholders (including subordinates) from the decision-making process. The non-participative top-down approach, while common in India, is discouraged in the US because it does not engage the followership. Turning a blind eye to these leadership attributes means imposing one's cultural ways of doing things onto foreign others, having deeper implications, for example, for employee well-being.

Consequences of being Culturally Indifferent

Regardless of a leader's competencies, not adapting to the host culture can damage their likability, an attribute that is often central to participative leadership. It has been found that when faced with a choice between a 'competent jerk' (well-qualified but not well-liked) and a 'lovable fool' (lacking knowledge but well-liked), employees tend to approach the 'lovable fool' to seek whatever information they may require (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005). This may extend to leadership contexts, where disliking one's leader can create interpersonal strain. One way this strain manifests is through work–family interference, particularly if subordinates feel unable to approach an unlikable leader to negotiate decisions that affect their work lives (Major & Lauzun, 2010). By adapting to the host culture, leaders may enhance their likability and perceived approachability, making employees more willing to engage with them around work–life arrangements (to balance work time with the time spent with family or for fun), which in turn can support employee well-being (Major & Lauzun, 2010).

Strategies to become Participative

There are two key strategies that a leader can adopt to become a participative leader. The first strategy involves focusing on *leader–member exchange* (LMX), which is building relationships with subordinates. It can be achieved through active listening, setting clear expectations, and sharing resources in ways that support both supervisor and subordinate (Major & Lauzun, 2010). The relationship can begin with something as simple as grabbing coffee or sharing a quick meal before work commences. This can promote familiarity between the two, and they also open space for discussing work roles in a way that balances work and personal life. As trust

develops when both invest in the relationship, subordinates feel valued and heard, and leaders begin involving them in decision-making (Major & Lauzun, 2010).

Alongside high-LMX relationships, leaders should acknowledge the different needs of every employee and, thereby, even beyond company policy, try to negotiate unique arrangements with individual employees, such as *idiosyncratic deals (i-deals)*. These can be of two types. Those requiring more time in their personal lives prefer flexibility i-deals to reduce stress from work interference. Others may negotiate for developmental i-deals, prioritising professional growth by greater career development opportunities (Major & Lauzun, 2010). Hence, leaders and employees are jointly involved in decision-making to create desired work-life outcomes facilitated by their high-LMX relationship.

Developing an Indian Expatriate Leader for the Anglo-US Context

I-deals and investing in high quality LMX relationships are two concrete behaviors an Indian expatriate leader should engage in to interact effectively with the team of local employees in an English-speaking country like the US. The effect of these strategies has so far been discussed in the context of maintaining a work-life balance because of the direct consequences for the organisation, such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and mental health (Major & Lauzun, 2010). However, participative leadership can also be related to issues like teamwork and diversity in small teams. While the main focus in this paper is on participative leadership, an Indian expatriate leader in the US should also work on reducing self-protectiveness, as it can breed distrust towards the organisation and cause inequity distress (stress from perceptions of injustice) when evaluating work outcomes. Working in the US can be intimidating, but it doesn't have to be; if an executive commits to developing participative and non-self-protective leadership through training, it eases acceptance in a foreign workplace while coming forth as an exceptional leader.

AI Contribution Statement

I used ChatGPT on 16 September 2025 to find synonyms for the word 'cautious', which I have used in the fourth paragraph—'wary'. I also used it to give synonyms for 'lovable fool', which it returned to me as 'affectionate clown', and I did not use it. To shorten the length and improve awkward framing of my sentences, I used ChatGPT on 20 September 2025 for the line, "Firstly, leaders should train in leader-member exchange or learn to develop relations with their subordinates using active listening skills, employing methods for setting mutual expectations, and techniques for exchanging resources…", which returned to me the statement, "The first is focusing on leader–member exchange, which simply means building better relationships with subordinates." I did not keep this framing of the sentence in the final paper. I also used ChatGPT for spell check and plagiarism check on 29 September 2025, before submitting.

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Ashoka Psychology Review, 2026, 10-12

Professor Mary Jane Arneaud

ASHOKA PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW

Cultural Tightness-Looseness and Self-Concept Clarity: A Comparison of India and Canada

Tvisha Tyagi

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Introduction

Most cross-cultural research on the relation between cultural forces and self-concept clarity (SCC) has focused narrowly on contrasts between Western and East Asian nations. SCC refers to the extent to which one's self-beliefs are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and stable (Campbell et al., 1996). These studies typically operationalize cultural variation through individualism–collectivism (Heine et al., 1999). While valuable, this framework does not address how strictly societies regulate behavior which directly shapes opportunities for self-exploration, identity, stability and well-being, factors central to SCC. Cultural tightness–looseness fills this gap by capturing the strength of social norms and the degree of sanctioning for deviance and offers a complementary lens for understanding variation in SCC (Gelfand et al., 2011).

While recent research in China demonstrates that cultural tightness undermines SCC, little attention has been given to whether the same effect extends to South Asia, specifically India, where tightness is reinforced because of emic features such as caste norms and family obligations (Mo et al., 2025; Sahakari, 2024). It is also unclear how moderate-tight societies like India compare with loose cultures beyond the United States. Canada provides a meaningful loose contrast because its normative environment is shaped by unique features such as legally institutionalised multiculturalism, high immigrant population and strong provincial autonomy (Brink, 2023; Uz, 2014). By comparing India and Canada, this study investigates how variations in cultural tightness shape SCC in two distinct, understudied contexts.

Operationalising Cultural Tightness–Looseness and Self-Concept Clarity

Cultural tightness–looseness describes how strongly societies enforce social norms and the degree to which deviations from these norms are tolerated or sanctioned (Gelfand et al., 2011). Tight cultures have clear rules, strong expectations for conformity and low tolerance for norm violations, whereas loose cultures allow more flexibility and behavioral diversity. Tightness often emerges in societies facing historical, ecological, or social threats such as high population density or resource scarcity that encourage strict norm enforcement, conditions which are highly relevant to India (Gelfand et al., 2011).

SCC refers to the extent to which an individual's beliefs about the self are clearly defined, internally consistent and stable over time (Campbell et al., 1996). Individuals with high SCC tend to have a coherent sense of identity and feel confident in their self-knowledge. Conversely, low SCC is associated with uncertainty and self-doubt. SCC is shaped by cultural norms which influence how people define and organize their self-views.

The Relation between Tightness-Looseness and SCC

Empirical research indicates a consistent relationship between cultural tightness–looseness and SCC. Mo et al., (2025) found that individuals in a culturally tight society reported lower SCC. For example, Chinese participants who perceived tighter norms, or less tolerance for deviance exhibited greater uncertainty about their self-beliefs and lower internal consistency. In contrast, American participants, from a looser cultural context, displayed higher SCC.

Similarly, Canadian participants, representing a relatively loose culture, demonstrated higher SCC, whereas Japanese participants, from a tighter cultural context, exhibited lower SCC (Campbell et al., 1996). These findings indicate that the restrictiveness of norms shapes SCC, suggesting tightness–looseness captures identity-relevant dynamics not accounted for by individualism–collectivism.

Dhawan et al. (1995) found that Indian participants' self-concepts emphasized social roles rather than individual traits. In the context of India's moderate cultural tightness (Sahakari, 2024; Gelfand et al., 2011), this focus on social roles suggests that social norms play a role in shaping the stability and internal consistency of self-concept.

The Importance of Tightness-Looseness and SCC

Studying SCC across culturally distinct societies is important as SCC is central to well-being, emotional stability and adaptive behavior. Not only are India and Canada understudied, but the nations also provide a particularly informative contrast. India's moderate cultural tightness (Sahakari, 2024; Gelfand et al., 2011) is reinforced by societal structures not found in East Asian nations, including caste hierarchies and family obligations, which create strong normative pressures that may in turn constrain SCC. Simultaneously, India's large population, linguistic diversity and variation between urban and rural contexts might introduce nuanced variability in norm enforcement. Canada, in contrast, represents a relatively loose culture (Uz, 2014). Its multicultural policies, diverse immigrant demographic and institutional emphasis on tolerance encourage behavioral flexibility (Brink, 2023). These features distinguish Canada from the United States and make it a unique loose society in which SCC may be supported by broader normative freedom and acceptance of difference (Campbell et al., 1996).

Comparing these two contexts allows us to think about whether patterns observed in extremely tight versus loose cultures might generalize to moderate versus loose societies, and perhaps novel considerations about how cultural norms influence SCC.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine how cultural tightness–looseness relates to SCC across two distinct national contexts. Based on existing evidence, the association between tightness and SCC may differ across India and Canada because the two societies vary in the strength of norms and their enforcement. India's moderate tightness may constrain the clarity and internal consistency of SCC, whereas Canada's relatively loose norms (Uz, 2014) provide greater tolerance for behavioral deviation, supporting higher SCC (Campbell et al., 1996). Therefore, cultural context is likely to change the relation between tightness and SCC, such that moderate tightness may be associated with lower SCC in India, whereas looseness may be associated with higher SCC in Canada.

AI Contribution Statement

In writing this paper, I used ChatGPT on 28 September 2025 to help me better understand the difference between the concepts of cultural tightness–looseness and honor and dignity, as I was confused about which suited my study better. My prompt was: "Explain the difference between cultural tightness–looseness and honor and dignity, and how these concepts relate to self-concept clarity." The AI-generated explanations were not copied; they were used solely for the purpose of understanding and clarifying doubts for the introduction of my paper. Everything was written in my own words. I also cross-checked all information with academic sources and incorporated proper citations for accuracy.

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