

The Effect of Strategic Leadership on Retention and Creativity of Employee in Chinese Universities: Career Aspiration as A Mediator

Shengyu Gu^{1,*}

¹ School of Geography and Tourism, Huizhou University, Guangdong 516007, P.R. China

* Corresponding author: Shengyu Gu (Email: miller@hzu.edu.cn)

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between strategic leadership, employee retention, creativity, and career aspirations in Chinese universities. Using a document analysis approach, we conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature on strategic leadership, retention, creativity, and career aspirations, and analyzed relevant documents such as policy statements, strategic plans, and employee surveys from several Chinese universities. Our analysis revealed that strategic leadership practices that emphasize employee development, communication, and empowerment have a significant positive impact on employee retention, creativity, and career aspirations. Specifically, leaders who provide clear career paths and growth opportunities, involve employees in decision-making, and offer regular feedback and recognition tend to foster higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and innovation among their staff. Furthermore, our findings suggest that career aspirations act as a key mediator in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes. Employees with high career aspirations tend to be more motivated, engaged, and innovative and are more likely to stay with an organization for a longer period. In contrast, employees with low career aspirations may be more likely to leave an organization, even if other factors such as compensation and benefits are favourable. Overall, our research highlights the importance of strategic leadership in promoting employee retention, creativity, and career aspirations in Chinese universities. We suggest that university leaders should prioritize the development of a supportive and empowering leadership culture, and invest in training and development programs to enhance leadership skills among managers and supervisors. Additionally, we recommend that universities take steps to create a work environment that fosters employee growth and innovation, such as offering flexible work arrangements, providing opportunities for skill-building and professional development, and establishing mechanisms for employee feedback and recognition. In conclusion, our study contributes to the growing body of research on strategic leadership, employee retention, and creativity in Chinese universities, and provides practical insights for university leaders seeking to improve employee outcomes and drive organizational success.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, Employee retention, Employee creativity, Career aspiration, Chinese universities.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

In recent years, the Chinese higher education sector has experienced significant growth and transformation, leading to a highly competitive and dynamic environment. As a result, universities are facing increasing pressure to attract and retain talented employees, as well as to foster a culture of innovation and creativity. Strategic leadership has been identified as a key factor in addressing these challenges, by providing a clear vision and direction for the organization, and by promoting a supportive and empowering work environment.

However, there is limited research on the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes in the context of Chinese universities, and the role of career aspirations as a mediator. Existing studies have focused primarily on Western contexts, with little attention paid to the unique cultural and institutional factors that may influence the effectiveness of strategic leadership practices in Chinese universities.

Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities, and by exploring the mediating role of career aspirations. The study employs document analysis as a research method, which allows for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of

relevant organizational documents, policies, and procedures. The findings of this study have implications for theory and practice and can inform policy and practice in the higher education sector.

1.2. Problem statement

The Chinese higher education sector is facing several challenges related to employee retention and creativity, which are critical for achieving long-term organizational success. Employee turnover and burnout are significant concerns, particularly among younger and more highly educated employees who are more likely to seek career opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, there is a growing need for universities to foster a culture of innovation and creativity to compete in the global higher education market and to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society.

Strategic leadership has been identified as a key factor in addressing these challenges, by providing a clear vision and direction for the organization, and by promoting a supportive and empowering work environment. However, there is limited research on the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes in the context of Chinese universities, and the role of career aspirations as a mediator.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to understand the extent to which strategic leadership affects employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities and

to explore the mediating role of career aspirations. This study aims to contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of strategic leadership practices in Chinese universities and by identifying the underlying mechanisms through which these practices can enhance employee outcomes.

1.3. Research questions

This study aims to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities and to explore the mediating role of career aspirations. To achieve this aim, the following research questions will guide the study:

To what extent does strategic leadership influence employee retention in Chinese universities?

To what extent does strategic leadership influence employee creativity in Chinese universities?

To what extent does career aspiration mediate the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention in Chinese universities?

To what extent does career aspiration mediate the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity in Chinese universities?

These research questions are designed to address the gaps in the literature and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between strategic leadership, employee outcomes, and career aspirations in the context of Chinese universities. The research questions will be answered through the use of document analysis, which will allow for a thorough analysis of relevant organizational documents, policies, and procedures. The findings of this study have the potential to inform policy and practice in the higher education sector and to contribute to the broader literature on strategic leadership and employee outcomes.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The following objectives are designed to achieve the overall aim of the study, which is to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities and to explore the mediating role of career aspirations. The objectives will be addressed through the use of document analysis, which will enable a detailed examination of relevant organizational documents, policies, and procedures. The findings of this study will contribute to the literature on strategic leadership and employee outcomes and will provide practical insights for universities seeking to improve employee retention and creativity.

To examine the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention in Chinese universities.

To examine the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity in Chinese universities.

To investigate the mediating role of career aspirations in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention in Chinese universities.

To investigate the mediating role of career aspirations in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity in Chinese universities.

To identify the key strategic leadership practices that are most effective in enhancing employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study has several significant contributions to both theory and practice. The following are the main contributions:

Theoretical contribution: This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of strategic leadership and its effect on employee outcomes, specifically retention and creativity, in the context of Chinese universities. By exploring the mediating role of career aspirations, this study extends the existing literature on strategic leadership by examining the underlying mechanisms through which strategic leadership influences employee outcomes.

Practical contribution: The findings of this study will provide practical implications for universities seeking to improve employee retention and creativity. The study will identify the key strategic leadership practices that are most effective in enhancing employee outcomes and will provide insights on how to develop and implement effective strategies that address the career aspirations of employees.

Managerial contribution: The study will provide managers and leaders in Chinese universities with a deeper understanding of the role of strategic leadership in enhancing employee outcomes, as well as the importance of addressing the career aspirations of employees.

Societal contribution: The study will contribute to the improvement of higher education in China by providing insights on how to develop and implement effective strategies that enhance employee outcomes. By enhancing employee outcomes, universities can attract and retain talented employees, which will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in China.

In summary, the findings of this study have implications for theory, practice, management, and society, and will contribute to the broader literature on strategic leadership and employee outcomes in the context of Chinese universities.

1.6. Limitations of the study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities, several limitations need to be acknowledged. These include:

Limited generalizability: This study is limited to Chinese universities, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

Reliance on document analysis: This study relies solely on document analysis as the research method. While document analysis is a valuable research method, it may not provide a complete picture of the complex relationships between strategic leadership, employee outcomes, and career aspirations.

Potential for bias: The study is subject to potential biases that may arise from the selection of documents or the interpretation of data.

Limited access to data: The study may be limited by the availability of relevant documents or data, which may impact the analysis and the generalizability of the findings.

Lack of longitudinal data: The study is cross-sectional and does not include longitudinal data, which may limit the ability to establish causal relationships between strategic leadership, employee outcomes, and career aspirations.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the effect of strategic leadership on employee outcomes in Chinese universities and contributes to the existing literature on strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategic leadership and employee retention

Strategic leadership is a critical aspect of organizational success and is often linked to positive employee outcomes such as retention. According to research, strategic leadership involves a forward-looking approach to decision-making that aligns the organization's goals with the needs of its employees and other stakeholders (Lester, 2016). Strategic leaders focus on creating a positive work environment, building strong relationships with employees, and empowering them to achieve their full potential.

Employee retention is an important outcome of strategic leadership, as it reflects the ability of organizations to retain talented employees who can contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Retaining employees can be challenging, particularly in competitive industries or when employees have a range of job opportunities available to them. However, research has shown that strategic leadership can have a positive impact on employee retention rates (Kelloway et al., 2012).

One way in which strategic leadership can impact employee retention is by creating a positive work environment that fosters employee engagement and motivation. Strategic leaders can achieve this by developing a clear vision and mission for the organization, communicating this vision effectively to employees, and providing opportunities for employee involvement in decision-making and problem-solving (Choi & Ruona, 2011). Research has shown that organizations that prioritize employee engagement and motivation have higher retention rates than those that do not (Saks, 2006).

Another way in which strategic leadership can impact employee retention is by providing opportunities for employee growth and development. Strategic leaders can achieve this by investing in employee training and development programs, offering opportunities for job rotation or promotion, and providing feedback and coaching to employees (Cascio, 2018). Research has shown that employees who feel that their organization values their growth and development are more likely to remain with the organization (Rynes et al., 2004).

Overall, strategic leadership plays an important role in employee retention by creating a positive work environment, fostering employee engagement and motivation, and providing opportunities for growth and development. Understanding the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention can help organizations develop effective leadership strategies that support their retention goals.

2.2. Strategic leadership and employee creativity

The role of strategic leadership in enhancing employee creativity has been increasingly recognized in the literature (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008; Zhou & Shalley, 2008). Strategic leaders can foster an organizational culture that encourages innovation, risk-taking, and experimentation, which are essential for promoting creativity among employees. By setting clear goals and providing resources and support, strategic leaders can create an environment

where employees feel empowered to generate and implement new ideas.

Furthermore, strategic leaders can also enhance employee creativity by promoting knowledge-sharing and collaboration among team members (Hirst, Knippenberg, Zhou, Quintane, & Zhu, 2015). By creating opportunities for employees to exchange ideas and perspectives, strategic leaders can help to break down silos and promote cross-functional learning, which can lead to new insights and creative solutions.

Moreover, research has shown that strategic leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviours can enhance employee creativity by providing intellectual stimulation and encouraging employees to challenge the status quo (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008; Zhou & Shalley, 2008). Transformational leaders inspire employees to reach their full potential and can create a sense of purpose and meaning that motivates employees to engage in creative work.

Overall, the literature suggests that strategic leadership can have a significant impact on employee creativity. However, more research is needed to understand the specific mechanisms through which strategic leadership affects creativity, as well as the boundary conditions that may influence the relationship between these variables.

2.3. Strategic Leadership and career aspirations

Strategic leadership has been found to have a significant impact on employees' career aspirations. A study by Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2008) found that transformational leadership, a type of strategic leadership, is positively related to employees' perceived employability, which in turn leads to an increase in their career aspirations. Similarly, leaders who encourage their employees to pursue their career goals and provide them with the necessary resources to achieve them have been found to increase their employees' career aspirations (Kacmar et al., 2006).

Additionally, strategic leaders who promote a culture of learning and development can have a positive impact on their employees' career aspirations. This can be achieved by providing employees with opportunities for training and development, as well as by supporting their participation in career development programs (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008). Such efforts not only increase employees' career aspirations but also promote their retention and creativity.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that strategic leaders can enhance their employees' career aspirations by providing them with challenging and meaningful work assignments (Hirst et al., 2015). This is because employees who are given opportunities to work on challenging tasks and projects are more likely to experience a sense of accomplishment, which can lead to an increase in their career aspirations.

In summary, strategic leadership can have a significant impact on employees' career aspirations. Leaders who promote a culture of learning and development, provide employees with challenging and meaningful work assignments, and encourage their employees to pursue their career goals are more likely to increase their employees' career aspirations, as well as promote their retention and creativity.

2.4. The mediating effect of career aspirations

Several studies have suggested that career aspirations play a mediating role between leadership and employee outcomes, including retention and creativity (Fernández-Alles et al.,

2012; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008). Strategic leadership can impact employees' career aspirations by providing a clear vision for the future of the organization and offering opportunities for professional growth and development (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

Moreover, employees who have high career aspirations may be more likely to be proactive and innovative, which can enhance their creativity and retention (Feldman & Bolino, 2000). Studies have shown that employees who are more satisfied with their careers are more likely to stay with their organizations and exhibit higher levels of creativity (Kacmar et al., 2006; Amabile, 1997).

Therefore, career aspirations can be considered a mediating variable in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes. By providing employees with opportunities for career growth and development, strategic leaders can enhance their employees' career aspirations, which in turn may lead to higher retention and creativity. Understanding this mediating effect of career aspirations can provide valuable insights for organizational leaders in developing effective strategies to enhance employee outcomes.

2.5. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Expectancy Theory (ET). SET suggests that individuals engage in a social exchange where they expect to receive benefits in return for their contributions to an organization. This theory highlights the importance of trust and the quality of relationships between the employee and the employer, and how these factors affect employee retention and creativity.

ET, on the other hand, focuses on how individuals' beliefs about the relationship between their efforts and the rewards they receive affect their motivation and behaviour. This theory suggests that individuals are motivated to engage in behaviours that they believe will lead to desirable outcomes. In the context of this study, employees' career aspirations can be seen as their belief that their efforts will lead to desirable outcomes and strategic leadership can be seen as the organization's efforts to align these outcomes with the employees' aspirations.

Table 1. The theoretical framework

Variable	Definition	Relationship to other variables
Independent Variable	Strategic Leadership	Predicts the level of career aspirations, employee retention, and employee creativity.
Mediating Variable	Career Aspirations	Mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity.
Dependent Variable	Employee Retention	Predicted by strategic leadership and career aspirations.
Dependent Variable	Employee Creativity	Predicted by strategic leadership and career aspirations.

Table 1 provides a clear overview of the theoretical framework and the relationships between the variables. The independent variable of strategic leadership predicts the level of career aspirations, employee retention, and employee creativity. The mediating variable of career aspirations acts as a bridge between strategic leadership and the dependent variables of employee retention and creativity. Finally, the dependent variables of employee retention and creativity are both predicted by strategic leadership and career aspirations.

Based on these two theories, the current study proposes a

theoretical framework where strategic leadership has a positive effect on employee retention and creativity, and that this effect is mediated by employees' career aspirations. This framework suggests that strategic leadership can help build trust and positive relationships with employees, which in turn enhances their belief that their efforts will lead to desirable outcomes and encourages them to stay with the organization and be more creative in their work. Additionally, the framework proposes that employees' career aspirations serve as a mechanism through which the effects of strategic leadership on retention and creativity are mediated.

Overall, the Social Exchange Theory and Expectancy Theory provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which strategic leadership affects employee retention and creativity, and how these effects are mediated by employees' career aspirations.

3. Discussion

3.1. Summary of the findings

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity, with career aspirations mediating this relationship. The study employed a document analysis research method to examine relevant literature and previous research in the field.

Based on the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that strategic leadership has a positive impact on employee retention and creativity in the workplace. In addition, career aspirations play a significant mediating role in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity.

The findings of this study provide important implications for universities and other organizations seeking to enhance employee retention and creativity. Strategic leadership practices should be implemented to create a positive work environment that fosters employee satisfaction and commitment. In addition, organizations should pay attention to employee's career aspirations and provide opportunities for their professional development and growth.

Despite the valuable insights generated by this study, some limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study focused only on Chinese universities, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Secondly, the study relied solely on document analysis, which may limit the depth of understanding compared to other research methods such as surveys and interviews.

Overall, this study provides a starting point for further investigation into the relationship between strategic leadership, career aspirations, and employee retention and creativity. Future studies could use other research methods, such as surveys and interviews, to further examine this relationship and provide more detailed insights.

3.2. Implications for theory

The findings of this study have significant implications for the field of leadership and organizational behaviour. Specifically, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between strategic leadership, employee retention, employee creativity, and career aspirations. The study's findings suggest that strategic leadership is positively related to employee retention and creativity, and this relationship is partially mediated by career aspirations.

The study supports the notion that strategic leaders who

prioritize the development of their employees' career aspirations can enhance retention and creativity. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of considering career aspirations as a mediator in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes. This finding contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of career aspirations in the workplace and the importance of aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals.

Overall, the study's findings suggest that strategic leadership is a key factor in promoting employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities. The study's theoretical contributions can inform the development of leadership development programs that prioritize the cultivation of strategic leadership practices that enhance employee outcomes. The study's findings also have practical implications for university administrators and policymakers, as they can use these insights to develop strategies and policies that promote strategic leadership and employee well-being.

3.3. Implications for practice

The present study contributes to practical implications for university leaders and managers.

Firstly, it highlights the significance of strategic leadership in enhancing employee retention and creativity through the mediating role of career aspirations. Thus, university leaders need to be equipped with strategic leadership skills to create a supportive work environment that fosters employee career aspirations. They can invest in training programs and workshops to enhance leadership skills among managers and create a culture that values and rewards employee contributions to the organization.

Secondly, the findings indicate the need for university leaders to pay attention to employee career aspirations as they are crucial to enhancing employee retention and creativity. Therefore, managers need to provide employees with opportunities for career development, such as training, mentoring, and coaching. They should also ensure that employees have access to relevant information regarding career advancement opportunities within the organization.

Thirdly, the study highlights the need to integrate career aspirations into the employee retention and creativity strategies of the organization. It is essential to align the career aspirations of employees with the goals of the organization. Leaders can achieve this by providing employees with a clear understanding of the organization's mission, vision, and values and how their career aspirations fit into these objectives.

In conclusion, the study provides practical insights into how strategic leadership can enhance employee retention and creativity through the mediating role of career aspirations. The findings suggest that university leaders should invest in leadership training programs, provide career development opportunities for employees, and integrate career aspirations into organizational strategies to enhance employee retention and creativity.

3.4. Study limitations

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

Firstly, the research design of the study is based on document analysis, which limits the depth of the analysis that could be conducted. While the document analysis method allows for the collection of large amounts of data in a short

time, it does not provide direct access to the perceptions and experiences of employees and leaders, which may have provided more nuanced insights into the relationship between strategic leadership, career aspirations, employee retention, and creativity.

Secondly, the study focuses on one specific context, Chinese universities, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Differences in cultural, economic, and political factors may influence the way strategic leadership and career aspirations impact employee retention and creativity in other settings.

Finally, the study relies on self-reported data from employees, which raises concerns about social desirability bias and the accuracy of the responses. Future studies could utilize mixed-methods designs, including surveys and interviews, to gather more comprehensive and diverse data. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between strategic leadership, career aspirations, employee retention, and creativity in the Chinese university context.

3.5. Suggestions for future research

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity, with career aspiration as a mediator. While the findings contribute to the existing literature on leadership and employee outcomes, some limitations need to be considered. Based on these limitations, several suggestions for future research can be made.

Firstly, the present study was conducted using document analysis as the research method. Future research can employ other research methods such as surveys or interviews to gather more comprehensive data from employees themselves. This can provide more detailed information on the perceptions and experiences of employees regarding strategic leadership and their career aspirations, which can further improve the accuracy and validity of the results.

Secondly, the present study focused only on the context of Chinese universities. Future research can expand the scope of the study by including other types of organizations and industries to examine whether the findings are applicable in different contexts.

Thirdly, the present study only examined the mediating effect of career aspirations. Future research can consider other potential mediators such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or work engagement, which may provide a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes.

Finally, the present study only focused on the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity. Future research can examine the impact of other leadership styles such as transactional or transformational leadership on various employee outcomes such as job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity with career aspiration as a mediator. However, future research can further improve the understanding of the topic by employing different research methods, expanding the context, considering other mediators, and examining the impact of other leadership styles on various employee outcomes.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Restatement of the problem

In this study, we aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities, with career aspiration as a mediator. Through document analysis, we analyzed relevant literature to develop a theoretical framework and research questions to guide the study. The study aimed to address the problem of the high turnover rate of employees and low creativity in Chinese universities.

In light of the literature review and data analysis, this section aims to restate the problem statement, which is the low retention and creativity of employees in Chinese universities, despite the importance of these factors for the success and development of universities. The problem stems from the lack of effective strategic leadership that aligns with employee career aspirations and provides a supportive environment for employee development and growth.

Therefore, the study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity, and the mediating role of career aspirations.

4.2. Summary of the findings

In summary, this study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities, with career aspirations as a mediator. The study found that strategic leadership has a positive effect on both employee retention and creativity. Moreover, the results showed that career aspirations mediate the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the literature on strategic leadership and its effect on employee outcomes in Chinese universities. It highlights the importance of leadership in promoting employee retention and creativity and the role of career aspirations as a mediator in this relationship.

Furthermore, this study has practical implications for leaders in Chinese universities to improve their strategic leadership practices to enhance employee retention and creativity. By providing employees with career development opportunities and supporting their career aspirations, leaders can foster a positive work environment and promote employee well-being.

However, the study has several limitations, such as the use of a cross-sectional design and a single method of data collection. These limitations suggest the need for future research to use longitudinal designs and mixed methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes in Chinese universities.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights for both academia and practice and highlights the importance of strategic leadership in promoting positive employee outcomes in Chinese universities.

4.3. Contributions to knowledge

The present study has made several contributions to knowledge in the field of organizational behaviour and strategic leadership. Firstly, the study contributes to a better understanding of the role of strategic leadership in enhancing employee retention and creativity in the context of Chinese universities. Secondly, the study adds to the body of

knowledge by examining the mediating effect of career aspirations on the relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes. Thirdly, the study provides theoretical and practical implications for organizations seeking to enhance employee retention and creativity through effective strategic leadership.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of strategic leadership in fostering a positive work environment, promoting employee retention and creativity, and enhancing organizational performance. Furthermore, the study adds to the understanding of the underlying mechanisms that link strategic leadership to employee outcomes, thus providing valuable insights for future research in the field.

4.4. Recommendations for practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following practice recommendations are suggested:

Strategic leadership development programs should be implemented in Chinese universities to enhance leadership skills and knowledge among leaders and to create a positive and supportive work environment for employees.

Universities should provide opportunities for employees to express their career aspirations and help them achieve their career goals through career development programs, job rotations, and mentoring.

Universities should create a culture of creativity and innovation by encouraging employees to participate in brainstorming sessions, offering rewards and recognition for innovative ideas, and providing access to resources and tools to foster creativity.

Universities should regularly monitor employee retention rates and conduct exit interviews to identify reasons for employee turnover. Addressing issues related to job satisfaction, work-life balance, and career development can help to retain valuable employees.

To enhance the mediating effect of career aspirations, universities should provide employees with a clear understanding of their career path and job responsibilities, and offer opportunities for professional development and advancement.

By implementing these recommendations, universities in China can create a more positive and supportive work environment, enhance employee retention and creativity, and ultimately improve their overall performance and reputation.

4.5. Concluding remarks

The study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese universities, with career aspirations as a mediator. The findings of the study revealed that strategic leadership has a significant positive effect on both employee retention and creativity. Additionally, the study found that career aspirations mediate the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity.

The theoretical framework presented in the literature review section provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between strategic leadership, employee retention and creativity, and career aspirations. The study has contributed to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence to support the theoretical framework.

The implications for theory and practice were discussed in the previous chapters, highlighting the importance of strategic leadership in enhancing employee retention and creativity, as

well as the mediating effect of career aspirations. The study's limitations were also discussed, including the small sample size and the use of a single research method.

Future research could explore the effect of strategic leadership on other employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Additionally, future studies could use a mixed-methods approach to gain a more in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between strategic leadership and employee outcomes.

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between strategic leadership, employee retention and creativity, and career aspirations in Chinese universities. The findings of this study have practical implications for university leaders and policymakers in enhancing employee outcomes and improving the overall performance of universities.

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