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Influence of Guanxi HRM Practices on Turnover Intention of Chinese Millennials in State-owned Banks: The Roles of Leader-Member Exchange, Organizational Identification and Traditionality

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Doctor of Management

Supervisors:
PhD MA Shaozhuang, Associate Professor,
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Abstract

High turnover among millennials is a challenge in Chinese business organization. It is even more so in Chinese state-owned banks where the Guanxi Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have been prominent. This study investigates the pathways and boundary conditions through which guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennials.

Based on social exchange theory, this study establishes the theoretical model about how guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennial employees. Organizational identification and leader-member exchange (LMX) are introduced as mediators and traditionality as a moderator to examine the different rules by which guanxi HRM practices affect millennials' turnover intention.

Using a sample of 467 participants, hypotheses were tested through multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that: (1) Guanxi HRM practices significantly and positively predict millennials' turnover intention; (2) organizational identification and LMX both partially mediate the positive impact of guanxi HRM practices on employee turnover intention; (3) and traditionality positively moderates the negative association between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification as well as the negative association between guanxi HRM practices and LMX.

This study enriches the literature of guanxi HRM practices by identifying the boundary conditions of traditionality. The findings have a number of managerial implications for retention of Chinese millennials in the banking industry.

Keywords: Guanxi HRM practice, Turnover intention, Chinese millennials, State-owned Banks, Traditionality.

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Resumo

A saída voluntária das organizações entre os millennials é um desafio para as empresas chinesas que é ainda maior na banca estatal chinesa onde as práticas de Gestão de Recursos Humanos Guanxi têm sido predominantes. Este estudo investiga os processos e as condições de fronteira através dos quais as práticas de GRH Guanxi afetam a intenção de saída voluntária nos millenials.

Com base na teoria de troca social, este estudo estabelece um modelo teórico sobre a forma como a GRH Guanxi afeta a intenção de saída por parte de empregados millennials. A identificação organizacional e a troca líder-membro (LMX) são introduzidas como mediadores e a tradicionalidade como moderadora para examinar as diferentes regras através das quais as práticas GRH Guanxi afetam a intenção de saída dos millennials.

Com base numa amostra de 467 indivíduos, as hipóteses foram testadas através de regressão linear múltipla. Os resultados indicam que: as práticas GRH Guanxi predizem de forma significativa e positiva a intenção de saída; a identificação organizacional e a LMX medeiam ambas, de forma parcial, o impacto positiva das práticas GRH Guanxi, sobre a intenção de saída; e a tradicionalidade modera positivamente a relação negativa entre as práticas GRH Guanxi e a LMX.

Este estudo enriquece a literatura sobre as práticas GRH Guanxi identificando o papel de condição de fronteira que a tradicionalidade assume. Os resultados incluem um número de implicações gestionárias para a retenção de millennials chineses.

Palavras-chave: Práticas de GRH Guanxi, Intenção de saída, millennials chineses, bancos estatais, tradicionalidade.

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摘　要

新生代群体的高离职率已成为中国企业组织所面临的一大挑战。这在人力资源管理关系实践现象较为普遍的中国国有银行中尤为突出。本研究旨在探讨人力资源管理关系实践对新生代员工离职意愿的影响路径和边界条件。

基于社会交换理论构建人力资源管理关系实践作用于员工离职意愿的理论模型。其中引入组织认同和领导成员交换作为中介变量，并引入传统性作为调节变量，考察人力资源管理的关系实践对新生代员工离职意愿的不同作用规律。

采用问卷调查法调查了 467 名新生代员工，并通过多元回归分析检验各个假设。结果发现：（1）人力资源管理关系实践显著正向预测新生代员工的离职意愿。（2）员工组织认同和员工领导成员交换均部分中介人力资源管理关系实践对其离职意愿的正向影响。（3）员工传统性在人力资源管理关系实践与其组织认同的负相关关系中起正向调节作用，在人力资源管理关系实践与其领导成员交换的负相关关系中起正向调节作用。

本研究通过确定传统性的边界条件，丰富了人力资源管理关系实践的研究。研究结果对于中国银行业新生代员工的人才保留具有诸多管理启示。

关键词：人力资源管理关系实践，离职意愿，中国新生代员工，国有银行，传统性

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How time flies! In the blink of an eye, my DBA program is close to completion. Looking back on this journey, I feel as if I had undergone metamorphosis. The moment I typed in the last word, mixed feelings overwhelmed my heart. Along this journey, I have met wonderful people and achieved growth beyond expectations, leaving no room for regret.

First of all, my especially heartfelt thanks go to my advisor Professor MA Shaozhuang from ISCTE. It is very lucky of me to be guided by such an extraordinary person who led me into the hall of higher learning step by step. Professor MA enlightened me with the truth and philosophy of life, made sound planning for every stage of my DBA program, and enabled me to remain composed and committed. Under his influence, I have come to grow much faster due to increased awareness of my own limitations, have more faith in myself with his praise and encouragement, and feel genuinely happy with his care and concern. He has set an excellent example with his conscientious research attitude, passion for life and sincerity towards others. And his profound knowledge, rigorous scholarship, professional ethics and high standards are the goals of my efforts. It is such a blessing to be his student! With this privilege, I am committed to bettering myself.

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better future. The selfless love from my family has been an inexhaustible source of my motivation and courage.

I am thankful for all the encounters. And I am also keenly aware that the end of one journey is the beginning of a new one. There is no end to learning. Hence, I will stay true to my mission and forge ahead with renewed determination.

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光阴荏苒，一转眼博士生涯已接近尾声。一路走来，成长如蜕。当论文敲下最后一个字的时候，回首当初种种，心中百感交集，在这里遇见的可爱美好的人，获得的超出预期的成长，都让我无悔当初的选择。

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List of Abbreviations

HR: Human resource

HRM: Human resource management

HRMGX: Guanxi HRM

LMX: Leader-member exchange

MNCs: Multinational companies

OI: Organizational identification

PCA: Principal component analysis

TI: Turnover intention

TRAD: Traditionality

WTO: World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

Entering the 21st century, China's labor market has undergone some subtle changes, with millennial employees born between the 1980s and the 1990s entering the peak of employment and gradually becoming the majority of the Chinese labor market (Zhao & Xu, 2016). Unlike the older generation of employees, the millennials have been given unique new-age characteristics. For example, most of them are the only children of their families and are much loved by their families; they grew up in the era of Reform and Opening-up and witnessed the changes of the times; they experienced the great clash and integration of Eastern and Western cultures in the context of socio-economic globalization (Tapscott, 1998); they happened to have been through the reform of higher education and are generally well-educated (Hou, Li, & Tu, 2014); they have been exposed to a large amount of knowledge and information from different societies amidst the rapid popularization of the Internet. Such upbringings and experiences have led to the formation of their distinct personality traits, such as a strong sense of innovation yet a low sense of job satisfaction and loyalty (Zhou, Zhao, & Jiang, 2016; Shri, 2011; Meister & Willyerd, 2010); a desire for short-term rewards coupled with a lack of patience and a dislike of routine work (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010); a high level of professional technical competence and computer skills, but a lack of exchange and communication skills (Smola & Sutton, 2002). In contrast, most managers were born in the "1950s, 1960s, and 1970s", and their upbringings and values bear strong marks of the times. This generational disparity has led to a large number of management conflicts and issues (Hou *et al.*, 2014; Shri, 2011), with one of the most typical and prominent problems being frequent job hopping (Liu & Huang, 2014; Ni, 2017; Wang, Chen, Hyde, & Hsieh, 2010; Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011). According to the survey of 51job Human Resources Research Center, the overall turnover rate of employees across various industries in China has continued to rise in recent years, with the overall turnover

rate of employees reaching 20.1% in 2016, of which the active turnover rate was 16.0%. It is particularly noteworthy that the active turnover rate of employees in the financial industry, represented by the banking industry, reached 17.3%, exceeding the overall average of 1.3%. Since China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, state-owned banks have gradually opened up to market competition and foreign investment. As an important segment of the financial industry, the banking industry has become a highly competitive part of the Chinese economy, followed by increasing employment pressure and an increasing demand for a highly educated workforce (Wang, Cooke, & Huang, 2014).

Correspondingly, the relatively well-educated millennials continue to join banks. Yet their good upbringings and superior living conditions often make it difficult for them to cope with the high-pressure work environment of the banking industry, resulting in the frequent occurrence of "flash quit" and "naked resignation" (Ni, 2017). It should be recognized that, from the perspective of long-term development, maintaining a certain turnover rate can inject new vitality into enterprises, help create a competitive atmosphere, and enhance the level of innovation. However, the frequent job-hopping of millennial employees in the financial sector, especially in the banking industry, is a drain on both human resources and business resources: On the one hand, it increases the cost of training and recruitment for enterprises. On the other hand, it leads to such problems as the loss of core customers as well as the disclosure of key skills and product policies, which in turn might cause huge losses to the enterprises and jeopardize their sustainability (Park & Shaw, 2013). Thus, digging deeper into the causes of the frequent resignations of millennial employees in the banking industry to understand the effect mechanisms involved and then mitigating them in a targeted manner is a common challenge in the management practices of the banking industry, and also an important issue that scholars continue to investigate.

As a reflection of an employee's psychological tendency to leave the current organization, turnover intention can be used to well predict turnover behavior (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Identifying the factors that influence the turnover intention of employees and their specific effect mechanisms will help find ways to prevent employee turnover. Existing theoretical studies focusing on the turnover intention of employees are

increasing, and scholars at home and abroad have conducted relatively in-depth discussions on the influencing mechanism of the turnover intention of employees from such perspectives as macro factors (such as level of employment and economic structure), organizational environment factors (such as transformational leadership and organizational justice climate), structural factors (such as job stress and compensation system), process factors (such as job satisfaction and organizational support), and individual factors (age and work-family balance) (Price & James, 2001; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Zhao, Hu, & Xia, 2016; Su, Ouyang, & Zhu, 2018). Among them, most of the theoretical studies on the turnover intention of employees in the Chinese context are based on foreign theoretical models and methods (Zhao *et al.*, 2016). However, research findings based on Western management theories often do not apply well to Chinese management practices. As Peter Drucker said, "Management transfers as culture changes". The vast differences in values, traditions and customs between Western and Chinese societies make it imperative to conduct contextualized and indigenous research.

Unlike Western management that underlines procedures and jurisprudence, Chinese business culture is heavily influenced by traditional Confucianism, and organizational management practices focus on sense, reason, and law in order of importance (Tang & Tang, 2011). Chinese people value human relations and guanxi (Wang, Wang, & Ma, 2018), and "human relations management" and "guanxi practices" largely affect the interpersonal environment in enterprises. This is particularly true for banks with particularly complex internal nepotism and kinship (Zhang, 1990). Guanxi human resource management (HRM) practices tend to result in a lack of justice and openness in salary and benefits distribution, performance appraisals, and promotions within an organization, leading to internal interpersonal tensions (Yang, 2018). For millennial employees in particular, their work values may be irreconcilable with the guanxi practices in organizations, which triggers a strong turnover intention. In fact, some studies have confirmed that HRM practices can have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees. For example, Ma and Trigo (2012) examined the association between employees' perceptions of HRM practices and their turnover intention in the Chinese subsidiaries of American, European and Japanese

multinational companies (MNCs), and found that employees' positive perceptions of HRM practices in organizations can help decrease their turnover intention. Subsequently, Ma, Silva, Callanb, and Trigoa (2016) subdivided HRM practices into committed and controlled HRM practices in their study and further validated that employees' perceived committed HRM practices in MNCs in the Chinese context significantly and negatively predict their turnover intention, while employees' perceived controlled HRM practices in local companies significantly and negatively predict their turnover intention. In addition, quite a few domestic studies focus on the positive effect of high-performance guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees. For example, Mao and Zeng (2017) examined the impact of high-performance HRM characterized by a combination of commitment-based and control-based HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees in China's emerging industries and traditional industries. Yan, Zhao, and Yu (2017) also validated the negative impact of high-performance work systems on the turnover intention of employees through empirical studies. Previous studies mostly focus on the mechanisms and boundary conditions of commitment-based, control-based, high-performance and other HRM practices that can effectively reduce the turnover intention of employees. However, few studies have attempted to identify the impact of guanxi HRM practices with strong Chinese management characteristic on the turnover intention of employees. Furthermore, since the research on the HRM of China's banking industry is still in the initial stage (Cooke, Cooper, Bartram, Wang, & Mei, 2019), there are even fewer studies on the banking industry with prominent guanxi HRM practices and employee turnover.

Unlike high-performance HRM practices that emphasize enhancing employees' skills, commitment and job performance through a dynamic combination of a unique and complementary set of HRM practices (such as flexible job assignment, rigorous selection process, extensive training and development, performance appraisal, competitive compensation and extensive benefits) (Cooke *et al.*, 2019) so as to reduce the turnover intention of employees (Mao & Zeng, 2017; Yan *et al.*, 2017), guanxi HRM practice describes the performance of organizations affected by private affinity in terms of hiring, job assignment, promotion, compensation and performance appraisal (Chen, Chen, & Xin,

2004), which may lead to a significant increase in the turnover intention of employees. Existing studies suggest that organizational managers' decision-making on the allocation of resources and benefits more with their own interests in mind or more for the benefit of those with whom they have good relationships will significantly affect employees' perceptions of procedural justice and their level of trust in their managers and organizations (Yang *et al.*, 2018; Zhang, Fan, & Zhu, 2014). From the perspective of employees' interactions with organizations, guanxi HRM practices reduce the emotional attachment of employees and go against the development of intrinsic work motivation and organizational loyalty (Yu & Fu, 2016; Fan, Yan, & Zhang, 2014), which may lead to a significant decrease in the level of employees' organizational identification. In addition, from the perspective of employee-leader interactions, guanxi HRM practices are not conducive to building long-term close relationships of mutual trust and mutual benefits between leaders and their subordinates, which may lead to low-quality leader-member exchange (LMX). Turnover intention is a retreating psychological choice made by employees after experiencing dissatisfaction (Porter & Steers, 1973), and its formation is a dynamic psychological evolutionary process (Cheng & Lin, 2017), in which an employee's identification with the organization and willingness to follow leaders can play an important role (Edwards & Peccei, 2010; Sun, Song, & Wang, 2013). In other words, guanxi HRM practices may lead to a decrease in both employees' organizational identification and the quality of LMX, both of which in turn can have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees.

In addition, it needs to be acknowledged that despite the fact that guanxi HRM practices can have some negative impacts on the job performance of employees and the overall benefits of organizations (Yu & Fu, 2016; Chen *et al.*, 2004; Yang *et al.*, 2019), they are still objectively present and pervasive in the management practices of Chinese enterprises. The reason for this may be related to Chinese people's cognitive attitudes and ideas long influenced and shaped by traditional culture. Traditionality is considered to be one of the concepts that can best describe the personality and values of Chinese people (Zhang, Zhang, & Zhao, 2017). The concept was first put forward by the famous Taiwanese psychologist Yang Kuo-Shu (2004), who constructed a five-dimensional structure of traditionality,

including submission to authority, filial piety and ancestral worship, conservation and endurance, fatalism and defensiveness, and male dominance. Traditionality is mainly expressed in the degree of individuals' acceptance of, respect for and commitment to traditional social norms and concepts. Existing research suggests that individuals with different levels of traditionality differ significantly in attitude formation and behavioral externalization, even when faced with the same management situations and events (Peng, Li, Zhu, & Zhang, 2017; Wu, Kwan, Wu, & Ma, 2018). Then, do millennial employees in the banking industry with varying degrees of traditionality develop different perceptions and attitudes? And do their levels of organizational identification, LMX, and turnover intention exhibit different outcomes in the context of guanxi HRM practice in their organizations?

In fact, China's state-owned banking industry has its own unique macro context and microenvironment. On the one hand, guanxi HRM practices in state-owned banking industry may be more prevalent relative to private and multinational banks. Institutional and mechanism innovation in China's state-owned banking industry is still hindered by major historical problems, and many state-owned banks still bear the marks of the planned economy, resulting in the imbalance between employees' responsibilities and powers and the serious problem of "insider control" (Gong, 2017; Wang & Li, 2002). In the course of work, some members are sometimes more powerful and have more resources and benefits at their disposal, but do not have to take responsibility for them. This organizational management style often leads to guanxi HRM practices. On the other hand, the massive expansion of joint-stock commercial banks, the increase in the number of foreign banks, and the continuous establishment of urban commercial banks have led to fiercer interbank competition and increased turnover of talents. Yet the governance of state-owned banks is characterized by an egalitarian distribution pattern and the residual of "officialdom", leading to the distortion of the incentive restraint mechanism (Zong, 2007), further increasing the phenomena where new and old employees seek higher positions, pursue higher income and get rid of the high pressure of existing jobs through resignation or job-hopping.

In this context, the present study aims to identify the effect mechanism by which guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennial employees, constructs a dual-

mediator model with organizational identification and LMX as mediators, and compare the mediating role of each in the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and the turnover intention of millennial employees. Besides, traditionality, which well reflect the values and personality traits formed under the long-term influence of traditional Chinese culture, is also included in the model to examine the different rules by which guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennial employees with varying degrees of traditionality. By doing so, this study helps enrich the theoretical research on employee turnover, responds positively to the call of such scholars as Tsui (2004) to increase contextualized and indigenous research, and provides some theoretical guidance for the banking industry to explore and improve HRM mechanisms.

1.2 Research purpose

This study aims to explore the impact of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry in the context of Chinese culture through scientific and standardized empirical analyses, while examining the mediating roles played by employees' organizational identification and LMX, as well as the possible moderating role that employees' traditionality plays in the process where guanxi HRM practices affect their turnover intention.

1.3 Research questions

The main research questions of this study include:

(1) How do guanxi HRM practices with strong Chinese management characteristics affect the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry?

(2) Will employees' organizational identification and LMX function as a mediating mechanism for the impact of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry?

(3) Does traditionality moderate the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and

organizational identification/LMX?

1.4 Research significance

This study takes millennial employees in the banking industry as participants, and explores the rules and boundary conditions by which guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennial employees. The research results have profound theoretical value and practical guiding significance.

(1) Theoretical significance

Employee turnover has been one of the hot topics in the field of management psychology and human resource management, and the psychological mechanism of action hidden behind frequent employee turnover is the focus of in-depth research. For millennial employees in particular, on the one hand, they exhibit voluntary turnover more frequently. On the other hand, their personality traits and psychological cognition with distinctive marks of the times make exploring employees' process of psychological change throughout turnover more urgent and important. At present, the research on the turnover intention of millennial employees is mainly focused on the influences of individual and organizational factors on the turnover intention of employees. The research on individual factors is more in-depth and comprehensive, whereas organizational factors mostly focus on discussions about the possible influences of such factors as leadership style, organizational culture and climate on the turnover intention of employees. Studies with analyses conducted from the perspective of guanxi HRM practices are very rare.

This study explores the effect of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry. Proceeding from the psychological mechanism of action, it constructs a dual mediator model to further explore the mediating effects of employees' organizational identification and LMX, identifies the path of "black box" influence of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry, and validates the mediating effect of employees' traditionality on the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and the turnover intention of millennial

employees in the banking industry. It bears several layers of significance. First, it expands the research on the antecedents of the turnover intention of millennials in the banking industry from the perspective of guanxi HRM practices, thereby contributing to the improvement and development of the employee turnover theory. Second, it discusses the dual mediator role of organizational identification and LMX, and explains the specific role paths through which guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of millennials. Third, it includes employee traditionality into the model as a mediator and dissects the boundary role personality traits play in the formation of the turnover intention of millennials. This study, which constructs a model of the role of guanxi HRM practices with strong Chinese characteristics on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry, and analyzes the boundary conditions of traditionality as one of the concepts that can best describe the personality and values of the Chinese people, is an attempt to move the research on turnover towards contextualized and indigenous settings.

(2) Practical significance

At present, a large number of millennials that grew up along with China's Reform and Opening-up have entered the workforce and become the majority in workplaces. Most of these millennials are the only children of their families. They enjoyed sound upbringings and are generally well-educated. As a result, they tend to bear personality traits of the times, such as high self-awareness, strong emotional demands, and low resilience. These personality traits tend to render them changeable in ideas regarding their career, less loyal to their enterprises, and prone to low job stability. Therefore, such phenomena as "naked resignation" and "flash quit" are very common among the millennials and "the waves of resignation" also occur frequently.

The high turnover of millennials affects not only their own career stability, but also the development of organizations and the cohesion of work teams, and even has a certain impact on society. Specifically, with the progress of the times and the development of economic globalization, the modern banking industry has gradually completed the transition from a traditional labor-intensive industry to a responsibility-intensive and knowledge-intensive industry. And the high turnover of millennial employees will often result in internal turmoil,

causing great losses to banks. First, in terms of cost, the turnover of millennials will inevitably result in the need for banks to invest more capital in HRM. Developing a new employee into a skilled employee requires such steps as hiring, staffing and training, and these processes are costly to advance. Yet the high turnover of employees after post assignment can turn the cost of development into a loss for the bank, which entails new cost for re-staffing. Secondly, from the perspective of talent structure, the high turnover of millennial employees in the banking industry has several impacts. On the one hand, there will inevitably be a talent gap, causing a talent crisis which results in weak coordination and manpower shortage. In the event of vacancies during the handover of jobs, the efficiency and quality of services of the bank's branches and sub-branches will be undermined, thus affecting its core competitiveness in the region. On the other hand, if millennial employees resign from a bank to join a competing enterprise, it may result in the loss of such resources as product policies and clients, which may have more severe side effects on the bank. Besides, in terms of the overall development of an enterprise, the high turnover of its millennial employees is not conducive to its stability. Currently, millennial employees have become the mainstay of the labor market. Their high turnover may cause mental fluctuations among other employees, triggering a chain reaction that jeopardizes cohesion and stability within organizations.

This study focuses on the turnover of millennial employees in the banking industry, probes into the impact of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees, and explores the specific mechanisms and boundary conditions involved therein. The research conclusions can serve as good references for banks to reduce the turnover intention of their millennial employees by way of improving guanxi HRM practices, increasing the level of organizational identification and LMX among millennials, as well as paying attention to and guiding their traditionality.

1.5 Research method

This study adopts survey method to collect data on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality to test the theoretical model.

For the convenience and accessibility of the survey, this study uses the online survey method to obtain the survey data by creating a designed questionnaire in the form of a web page and sending the questionnaire link to the participants.

This study uses such data processing software as SPSS and AMOS for processing and modeling. Specifically, the demographic variables of the participants are analyzed, common method bias tests on the data performed, scale reliability identified by calculating Cronbach's coefficients, discrimination validity test performed through a structural equation model, descriptive statistical analyses, and hypothesis tests of main, mediating and moderating effects conducted through linear regression analysis. The operation results were explained based on results of the statistical analysis.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six chapters, namely, Introduction, Literature Review, Research Method, Research Results Analyses, Research Results Discussions, as well as Research Conclusions and Prospects.

Chapter 1: Introduction. The research questions and research background of this study are put forward; the purpose of this study clarified; the basic framework and main contents of this study elaborated on; and the theoretical and practical significance of this study lighted upon.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. A summary analysis of existing research results is made based on a review of a large amount of literature. The connotations of guanxi HRM practices, the turnover intention of employees, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality are clarified, an overview of the antecedents and outcome variables of each variable made, a literature analysis and summary review of the associations between relevant variables conducted, and the theoretical achievements and limitations of existing research pointed out. On this basis, the theoretical hypotheses of this study are put forward through theoretical derivation.

Chapter 3: Research Method. The research subjects are identified based on the literature

review and theoretical assumptions; mature scales are selected to measure guanxi HRM practices, the turnover intention of employees, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality; the data collection process is reported; and the sample data are utilized to conduct reliability and validity analyses of the scales.

Chapter 4: Research Results Analysis. Such data analysis software as MPLUS and SPSS are used for relevant processing and analysis of the research data to test the theoretical hypotheses, including descriptions of participants' demographic variables, descriptive statistics of the variables, discriminant validity tests and hypothesis tests. In the hypothesis test, the main effect of guanxi HRM practices, the mediating effect of organizational identification and LMX, and the moderating effect of traditionality are tested one by one.

Chapter 5: Research Results Discussions. The results of the variables and hypothesis tests are analyzed and discussed upon.

Chapter 6: Research Conclusions and Prospects. The findings of this study are summarized; practical implications are put forward from several aspects, respectively guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality; Limitations of this study are pointed out and suggestions for future research given.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the concept and personality traits of millennial employees and provides a literature review of the five main variables involved in this study, namely, guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, traditionality, and turnover intention, with a view to laying a theoretical foundation for the establishment of the theoretical model and testing of hypotheses via deduction.

2.1 Millennial employees

2.1.1 Definition of the concept of millennial employees

Scholars initially referred to the "post-80s (people born after the 1980s)" as "Generation Y". Tulgan and Martin (2001) define Generation Y as those born around the 1980s and point out that Generation Y is the new generation with optimism, confidence and high self-esteem. Hansford (2002) considers Generation Y to be the generation born between 1980 and 2000, who are the new vitality in enterprise workforce. As Generation Y reached adulthood at the dawn of the new millennium (2000), many scholars refer to them as the "millennials" (Shri, 2011; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Williams, 2017).

In China, the attention to the "Millennials" came slightly later than western countries. In 2010, the State Council issued the Central Document No. 1, where "the new generation of migrant workers" was used for the first time. Since then, the concept of "New Generation" has gradually become known and familiar to the public. A large number of scholars in China have defined millennial employees as the generation of employees born after the 1980s, who grew up with the development of computers and the Internet. Their growth bears the distinctive characteristics of the times. And they are the group that gets in touch with social changes the fastest and absorbs the largest amount of new information (Ni, 2017; Cheng & Lin, 2017). Zhang and Zhou (2015) explicitly define millennial employees as the identifiable

group born between the late 1970s and the early 1990s that grew up with China's Reform and Opening-up, the establishment of market economic system and globalization, and high-tech industrial revolution. Zhao and Xu (2016) also define millennial employees as those born after the 1980s and the 1990s, and most of the domestic studies recognize this definition. Ma, Lai, Zeng, & Ramalho (2019) define millennial employees as the group born after 1980 in their study. The present study draws on this definition and similarly defines millennial employees as those born after 1980. Millennial employees grew up along with the information age and knowledge economy. They are proficient in network technology and highly-educated, function as the mainstay of the era of science and technology, and play an important role in improving corporate performance (Zhou *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.2 Personality traits of millennial employees

Millennial employees are becoming the main workforce in enterprises. Enterprises that wish to manage millennial employees must first of all understand their trait characteristics. There are lots of studies about Generation Y. According to Martin (2005), "Generation Y" in the United States is an exceptionally independent generation. This group of people often possess the mentality of entrepreneurs, cherish freedom, love challenging work, have a stronger need for timely feedback in work, and pursue work-life balance more than previous generations. Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010) suggest that Generation Y is a self-centered generation, who like to complete work according to their own ways and have higher demand for autonomy. Shri (2011) also suggests that Generation Y prefers flexible work styles to a stable job, and they have lower job loyalty and higher turnover at work. Rottink (2017) suggests that Generation Y employees' perceptions towards work and organization cover three major themes, namely, freedom, self-centeredness and hedonism. In comparison, millennial employees are significantly different from the previous generations of employees in terms of capabilities, demand characteristics and personality traits due to the radical changes in the economic and socio-cultural background they are in. As a result, their outlook on life, view of career, attitude towards work and behavior are very different from the previous generations (Williams, 2017).

Chinese scholars have also conducted many studies on millennial employees who carry the personality traits with a distinctive mark of the times. For example, Li (2007) argues that millennial employees are well-educated and therefore tend to have more diverse values. Most of them are characterized by such personality traits as a strong personality and no fear for power; pursuit of freedom and autonomy; emancipation of thoughts and strong willingness to move; a weak sense of responsibility and lack of self-restraint. With regard to their work values, Hou *et al.* (2014) suggest that millennial employees value the material rewards of work, have a personalized sense of self and a unique way of thinking, and emphasize the pursuit of satisfaction of internal needs and preferences. Meanwhile, they disregard authority and cherish interpersonal equality and a harmonious organizational climate, have a high degree of cultural openness, dare to challenge traditions and promote organizational innovation, and have such work attitudes and perceptions as focusing on seeking good career development and expecting extensive room for development. According to Li's (2013) study, millennial employees have high expectations for leaders. They are free from blind faith in authority, desire to be treated sincerely, and expect leaders to be fair, just and spiritually caring. Zhang and Lian (2017) argue that millennial employees are generally less committed to work, place more importance on personal interest, sense of achievement, social interactions and healthy leisure, have stronger self-esteem and self-confidence, emphasize individualism, justice and freedom, and assess the value of work with achievements, development and material rewards as criteria. In a word, since millennial employees witnessed China's Reform and Opening-up, grew up in a period characterized by the establishment of market economy, rapid technological development, changes in life and work by information technology, as well as economic and cultural globalization, their personal traits, job motivation, job performance and job demands are significantly different from those of the previous generations (Peng & Guo, 2015).

2.2 Guanxi HRM practices

2.2.1 HRM practices

Since the 1980s, with the rapid progress of technology and constant changes in the

market environment, the production activities of enterprises have gradually shifted to knowledge-based. In the meantime, economic globalization has been on the rise. Changes in the external environment require enterprises to make corresponding changes in management ideas and management models (Yang & Liu, 2015). Amidst a series of changes, the strategic value of human capital has become increasingly prominent, and more and more managers realize that employees are not replaceable commodities under the scientific management philosophy, but important forces that can powerfully drive the development of enterprises and build their long-term competitive edges (Sun, 2014). As a result, enterprise HRM has received more and more attention from academia and the business community.

Traditional HRM work consists of six modules, namely, human resource (HR) planning, recruitment and staffing, training and development, performance management, compensation and benefits management, and labor relations management. Each of these six modules has its own focus, but they are closely interlinked, inter-connected and interactive, forming an effective HRM system. Specifically, HR planning is the starting point of management, emphasizing the planning and forecasting of an organization's staff composition; recruitment and staffing underline solutions to an organization's staff input and person-post matching; training and development focus on the cultivation of employees; performance management is the core of the six modules, emphasizing the solution to how an organization uses people; compensation and benefits stress the motivation of employees; labor relations management highlights the formation of an effective cycle to help an organization rationalize its human resources allocation. HRM is an organic whole and the absence of any module will affect the balance of the entire system. However, it is worth noting that in different situations, it is necessary to continuously adjust the focus of HRM in order to maintain the healthy operation of an organization and provide human support for the achievement of the organization's strategic goals (Ren & Liu, 2016). To this end, in recent years, a large number of researchers have focused on how to establish effective HRM models from a strategic perspective with a view to identifying the best HRM practices (Cooke, 2009; Sun, 2014).

Proceeding from the six HRM modules, scholars have extensively explored the best

HRM practices that are widely applicable and able to continuously improve organizational performance. For example, Delery and Doty (1996) summarized seven best HRM practices, namely, job definition, internal career opportunities, voice mechanisms, training systems, employment security, appraisals and profit-sharing plans. Pfeffer (1998) also put forward seven best HRM practices, respectively employment security, selective hiring, self-managed and effective teams, reduction of status difference, contingent compensation, extensive training and information sharing. Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) identified the seven best HRM practices that are commonly applied, namely, employee selection, internal promotion, training, job description, employment security, results-oriented appraisals, incentive compensation and participation mechanisms. In addition, some scholars have summarized the HRM systems from various HRM practices. A well-known one is the "AOM" model of high-performance work system proposed by Appelbaum (2000). This system views organizational performance as a derivative function of the organizational core element structure, and the three key elements, namely, ability, motivation and opportunity to participate, constitute the organizational structure. Therefore, HR practices in a high-performance work system should influence performance by enhancing the ability of employees to perform their duties, increasing their motivation, and providing them with more opportunities to participate.

2.2.2 HRM practices in the Chinese context

HRM is becoming more and more important in contemporary organizational management, and modern enterprises cannot operate without in-depth planning and rational allocation of human resources. With the continuous increase in China's economic strength and comprehensive national power, more and more scholars have focused and conducted in-depth research on HRM theories and practices in the Chinese context. Specifically, a large number of Chinese scholars have drawn on Western research findings to address commitment-based, control-based, developmental, supportive, market-oriented, employee-oriented, inducement-based, investment-based and commitment-based HRM practices in Chinese organizations, while others have focused on such aspects as best HRM practices, high-performance HRM practices and strategic HRM (He, Yuan, & Peng, 2011; Chen, Tan,

& Cao, 2013; Sun, 2014; Peng & Guo, 2015; Yang & Liu, 2015; Liu, Li, Guo, & Zheng, 2016; Mao & Zeng, 2017; Ma, Yan, Chen, & Weng, 2019). In fact, currently the definitions of different HRM practices are relatively vague in the academia. Scholars have put forward many different concepts, such as high-performance work system (HPWS), high-performance HR system, high-performance HR practice, high-commitment system, high-involvement system and best human resource management practice. Some domestic and foreign scholars even directly use the term "HR system" or "HRM practice" without a specific prefix. Regardless of how they are called, these concepts essentially refer to a full range of HRM activities and have no significant difference in the specific measurement items. (Kim, Wright, & Su, 2010; Sun, 2014).

Regarding the HRM practice model in the Chinese context, Jiang and Zhao (2004) put forward the HRM practices with HR planning, formal recruitment procedures, systematic trainings, internal labor market and performance-based compensation as the main elements; Su (2010) argues that the high-performance HRM system of Chinese enterprises consists of not only commitment-oriented Western high-performance work practices but also some control-oriented local HR practices, which specifically include seven aspects, namely, strict hiring, employee contest mobility and discipline management, results-oriented appraisals, employee participation management, extensive training, internal labor market and information sharing. Zhang (2013), targeting at knowledge-intensive service enterprises, proposed that an HR management system that consists of long-term HR planning, strictly regulated hiring, both material and spiritual incentives, performance appraisal oriented towards both work results and behavior, systematic trainings, competency-based HR mobility, two-way circular communication and voluntary teamwork practices, has a positive impact on achieving excellent performance and sustained competitive advantages for an enterprise. In addition, drawing on the findings of Western research on HRM practices, some scholars have started to shift their research perspective towards guanxi HRM practices with Chinese characteristics (Yu & Fu, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2018).

When indigenous entrepreneurs and scholars rethink the role of "guanxi" that is prevalent in organizations in the particular context of Chinese business organizations, the

research attention turns to many issues that have been neglected by Western research on HRM (Liu, Liu, & Wang, 2016). In the organizational context of Chinese enterprises, guanxi carries strongly negative emotions, such as "partiality" and "cliques". And guanxi-based HRM practices underpinned by "cronyism" and "nepotism" are prevalent in Chinese enterprises, while they are rarely found in Western HRM practices (Luo & Wang, 2010). Unlike the differentiated management based on the strategic value of human resources in the West, the differentiated HR management in Chinese organizations based on affinity can have a significant impact on the selection, promotion, rewards and punishment of employees. Employees who have developed close relationships with their managers are at the heart of the organizational structure, enjoy more flexibility in job responsibilities, and can gain advantages in resource allocation. Therefore, Chinese employees, on the one hand, take an aversion to "guanxi" in organizations, yet on the other hand, want to be part of a "guanxi group" so as to qualify for "differentiated" treatment by the management.

As the millennials represented by the "post-80s" and the "post-90s" gradually enter the labor market and become the main workforce of enterprises (Zhao & Xu, 2016), they exhibit such personality traits as a strong psychological need for respect and recognition at work, a desire for organizational justice and low loyalty, which pose great challenges to HRM (Hou *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, in the face of HRM challenges in Chinese enterprises and organizations, it is difficult to fully reflect the embedded associations established between employees and organizations by merely applying Western management theories to consider the strategic value of employee human capital as those theories are not fully applicable to the reality of HRM practices in Chinese enterprises. Therefore, how to understand the role played by guanxi HRM practices in organizations is currently a topic of shared interest for management scholars and entrepreneurs alike.

2.2.3 The connotations of guanxi HRM practices

(1) The connotations of guanxi

As a popular word in contemporary Chinese society, guanxi has a very profound socio-cultural background. The existing research has studied "guanxi" in depth from the

perspectives of different disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology, economics, sociology and management. A great deal of research focusing on "guanxi" between people defines "guanxi" as a bond that connects different individuals. In the Chinese society, complex relationships are prevalent, which might be a result of a long period of influence by Chinese traditional Confucianism. As the philosophical foundation of the concept of Chinese "guanxi", Confucian ethics hold that human beings are not isolated, but exist in various relationships, such as "emperor-official", "father-son", "husband-wife", "elder brother-younger brother" and "friend-friend" relationships, to name but a few.

Liang (1987) points out that relationship takes a crucial place in the social life of Chinese people, and Chinese society can be considered as a relationship-oriented society. Chinese people's first layer of social life comes from the family and the second from such connections as relatives, neighbors and friends. These two layers of social life prescribe the legal system in politics and moral conditions in the society, concentrate the demands of the Chinese, and define the scope of their activities. A more classic study of Chinese guanxi is the concept of "differential pattern" put forward by sociologist Fei Xiaotong, which is the most indigenous interpretation of Chinese guanxi. He argues that the Chinese's way of dealing with relationships with others is "like the ripples rolling out in circles when a stone is thrown onto the surface of the water. Each person is at the center of a circle pushed out as a result of social influences. Connections occur wherever the ripples of the circles approach. The circle that each person puts to use in a certain place at a certain time is not necessarily the same." The guanxi emphasized in the Chinese society is like water ripples, presenting a concentric circle structure: Centering on blood relationships and geo-relationships, the ripples push the circles further and further away layer after layer, rendering outer circles thinner and thinner. And people with different degrees of affinity and trust are distributed on the concentric circles with different diameters.

The above two scholars have reflected on "guanxi" in depth based on Chinese traditional ideas and cultural background, and put forward keen insights, laying a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent research on "guanxi". In recent decades, a large number of scholars have attempted to define the connotations and concept of "guanxi" from

different perspectives. For example, Jacobs (1979) argues that Chinese people establish relationships (kuan-hsi) based on certain shared understandings between two parties, and that this particular kind of connection known as "guanxi" between Chinese people can lead to the development and maintenance of intimate ties through social interactions. Hwang (1987) also points out that guanxi literally means "connection" or "association", and that the essence of guanxi is the personal connection that facilitates human exchange. Yang (1994) proposes a concept that is basically recognized by a large number of scholars, and also extends the connotations of guanxi to social communication. She argues that guanxi is based on the benefits and advantages that can come from each other, and that guanxi at the individual level is a binary relationship that exists implicitly in interpersonal communication. Since then, many scholars have studied "guanxi" in depth on this basis. Specifically, Chen and Chen (2004) define guanxi as an informal and special interpersonal connection between two parties. They point out that individuals will be regulated and constrained by an implicit psychological contract after they establish guanxi, and this psychological contract requires both parties to the guanxi to obey and enforce various relevant social norms, such as loyalty and commitment to each other and maintenance of this connection for a long time. This definition has been accepted and adopted by most scholars.

(2) The connotations of guanxi practices

Based on the study of "guanxi", research on "guanxi practice" has been derived. The study of "guanxi practice" can be traced back to 1998 when Guthrie made a distinction between the concepts of "guanxi" and "guanxi practice". Specifically, he proposed that "guanxi" emphasizes interpersonal communication based on emotional attachment and obligations, while "guanxi practices" are practical actions of using relationships for reciprocity, or in other words, using guanxi to achieve such instrumental purposes as the exchange of benefits, reciprocal obligations or the completion of tasks. Since then, a more influential study was carried by Chen *et al.* (2004) who explored guanxi practices within organizations. They believe that in Chinese organizations, supervisors' management decision-making is influenced to a certain extent by the "guanxi" culture. And they refer to this type of HRM practices influenced by interpersonal relationships as "guanxi practices"

or "guanxi HRM practices". It is specifically manifested in that managers use interpersonal relationships as the basis for making HRM decisions, or in other words, making decisions about promotion, rewards, task assignment and performance appraisals based on their relationships with subordinates. For example, subordinates may use their relationship basis (such as shared social identity with their supervisors) to influence supervisors' promotion decisions (Yu & Fu, 2016); In turn, supervisors may make reward allocation decisions based on the quality of their relationships with subordinates; And employees may strive to establish good relationships with their supervisors in order to secure an advantage in performance appraisal (Zhang, Long, & Wu, 2015). In the guanxi practices defined by Chen *et al.* (2004), the scope of interpersonal relationships encompasses not only informal social connections such as family relations, fellow countrymen and classmates, but also formal relationships in organizations such as those between superiors and subordinates.

Further, Chen, Friedman, Yu, & Sun (2011) classify guanxi practices into two categories, namely, individual-level guanxi practices and group-level guanxi practices: individual-level guanxi practices refer to the situations where leaders make HRM decisions based mainly on interpersonal relationships and allocate favorable resources to subordinates who are close to them. So, individual-level guanxi practices highlight both parties to the guanxi. In comparison, group-level guanxi practices refer to the general pattern where an organization or a department makes HR decisions based on the level of interpersonal relationships. It emphasizes the focus on all employees in an organization or a department. When guanxi HRM practices are prevalent in an organization, several individuals will benefit from such guanxi practices if leaders allocate resources based on affinity with employees, while from the perspective of the group level, most employees do not have close relationships with leaders and thus guanxi practices will negatively affect most employees (Fu *et al.*, 2019).

In summary, this study selects the definition of guanxi practice given by Chen *et al.* (2004). That is, guanxi practices refer to situations where managers use interpersonal relationships as the basis for making HRM decisions and allocate favorable resources to subordinates who are close to them. For example, they tend to make decisions on promotions, rewards, task assignment and performance appraisals based on their relationships with

subordinates.

2.2.4 Brief review on guanxi HRM practices

In the Chinese society, "relationalism" has a profound and far-reaching impact on organizations, groups, and individual behavior (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Studies have shown that guanxi HRM practices have a more significant impact on employee attitudes and behavior than the state of guanxi (Chen *et al.*, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2004; Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Because guanxi practices within an organization are a new variable, academic research on the outcome variables of guanxi practices is also quite limited. Most studies on guanxi practice focus on its impact on employee attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding the impact of guanxi practices on employee attitudes, scholars generally agree that guanxi practices negatively affect subordinates' attitudes (Chen *et al.*, 2004; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Jiang, Cannella, Gao, & Jiao, 2013; Fan *et al.*, 2014). For example, Chen *et al.* (2004) empirically tested the negative impact of managers' guanxi practices on subordinates' perceptions of procedural justice in Chinese enterprises; Jiang *et al.* (2013) analyzed the in-depth interviews with employees in Chinese enterprises and concluded that subordinates' perceptions of justice within an organization are influenced by leaders' intra-organizational guanxi practices; Fan *et al.* (2014) validated that supervisors' guanxi practices weaken subordinates' psychological attachment to an organization and decrease employees' emotional commitment to the organization. Wang *et al.* (2018) found that the stronger the guanxi practices perceived by employees in an organization, the weaker their motivation for performance improvement. Yang, Huang, Tang, Yang, and Wu (2019) collected data from 42 supervisors and 189 subordinates in three phases over six months and validated the negative impact of employees' perceived guanxi HRM practices on their emotional exhaustion and job performance through empirical analysis. Besides, empirical studies have shown that guanxi-based HRM decisions implemented by leaders within organizations can undermine subordinates' trust in organizational management (Jiang *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2015).

As to the impact of guanxi practices on employee behavior, Fan *et al.* (2014) found through research that guanxi practice will result in an uneven distribution of resources within

an organization, which directly and negatively affects the intrinsic motivation of employees' work behavior and ultimately negatively affects the innovative behavior of subordinates; Wu, Ming, and Huang (2019) explored the impact of guanxi practices on employees' non-ethical behaviors in an organization using 379 employees from a Chinese company as participants. Yu and Fu (2016) validated the negative predictive effect of leaders' guanxi practices on employees' in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior from the perspectives of behavioral attitudes and subjective norms.

Some studies suggest that guanxi practice within organizations can have conflicting effects on employee attitudes and behavior, both for the benefit of individual employees and to the detriment of the organization as a whole. For example, Chen *et al.* (2011) empirically tested the different effects of different dimensions of guanxi practices on subordinates' perception of procedural justice from the perspectives of both the individual and group dimensions of guanxi practices. This research has shown that subordinates' positive perceptions of procedural justice increase when they benefit from guanxi practices at the individual level. Yet at the same time, when subordinates in a department are aware that HRM decision-making is influenced by guanxi, most of them would perceive injustice within the group, which negatively affects their sense of procedural justice. Guanxi practices can also have both positive and negative effects on subordinates' work behavior. Yang's (2014) study shows that guanxi HRM practices affect employees' job performance, and this effect is not one-sided—either positive or negative—but differs based on subordinates' political skills. Subordinates who have strong political skills will view leaders' guanxi practices as an opportunity, and thus use such guanxi practices to enhance job performance through their keen insights and understanding; In contrast, subordinates who have poor political skills can hardly establish good relationships with superiors and adapt to the environment, and they tend to treat work negatively due to the uneven distribution of resources within the organization, resulting in lower job performance. Fu, Yu, and Liang (2019) reached a consistent conclusion through 464 paired questionnaires across 48 sectors in 12 Chinese enterprises. They found that in the single-level model, individual-level guanxi practices have a positive effect on employees' in-role performance and organizational

citizenship behavior, while in the multi-level model, group-level guanxi practices have a significantly negative effect on employees' in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior.

2.2.5 Measurement of guanxi HRM practices

In recent years, although some studies have focused on guanxi practices, there are not many tools developed to measure guanxi practices with employees in the Chinese context as participants in empirical studies. Most of the existing studies of relevance use the scale developed by Chen *et al.* (2004) with Chinese enterprise employees as participants. In their study, Chen *et al.* (2004) asked participants to list the different guanxi foundations in organizations and how individuals use these types of guanxi. Through continuous induction and deduction of textual materials, they constructed a one-dimensional structure of guanxi practices and selected five representative behaviors as measurement items of guanxi practices. For example, "In our department, supervisors usually decide how to assign tasks based on their relationships with subordinates", and "In our department, guanxi affects supervisors' appraisals of subordinates' performance". They adopted the six-point Likert scale in their study, which boasts high reliability performance with a Cronbach's α value of 0.92. The scale is aimed at Chinese enterprise employees, and measures and evaluates the superior-subordinate guanxi from the perspective of subordinates' perceptions. It forms the measurement structure of guanxi practices by screening out behavioral performance that is representative (mentioned by most employees) and sufficient (clearly expressing supervisors' guanxi practices). And this one-dimensional guanxi practice questionnaire is currently the most frequently used measurement tool in empirical studies involving guanxi practices.

In addition, Chen *et al.* (2011) sub-divided guanxi practices into the individual-level and the group-level in their research on the positive and negative effects of guanxi practices on subordinates. And they adopted different scales for each of the two levels. Specifically, they drew upon the three-item scale developed by Lin (2002) for individual-level guanxi practices and used the six-point Likert scale for scoring, and its reliability performance was sound with a Cronbach's α value of 0.82. Group-level guanxi practices were measured using

the scale developed by Chen *et al.* (2004) and the six-point Likert scale was also used, which performed well in terms of reliability, with a Cronbach's α value of 0.81. Although the scale was completed by individual employees, Chen *et al.* (2011) aggregated the data from individual responses to the group level in their study, validating that the aggregation tests meet the criteria and can represent the level of group-level guanxi practices.

2.3 Leader-member exchange (LMX)

2.3.1 Connotations of LMX

Interpersonal relationships in organizations are complex. Relationships within an organization can be divided into "horizontal" relationships and "vertical" relationships depending on the direction. A "horizontal" relationship refers to a relationship in which both parties are at the same level, whereas a "vertical" relationship refers to the interaction between a superior and a subordinate in an organization. Because superiors have power over subordinates and the interactions between members at different levels are more complex, the academia and business community are more interested in "vertical" relationships in organizational management. LMX is precisely a concept that describes the interactions between subordinates and immediate supervisors in an organization.

Before the concept of LMX was introduced, relevant studies on leadership in the academia primarily focused on how to enhance leadership effectiveness through the top-down approach. For example, the theory of leadership traits emphasizes the search for effective leadership traits from the perspective of personality traits; situational leadership theory highlights the search for leadership styles that adapt to different situations features; and leadership behavior theory stresses the search for leadership effectiveness from the perspective of leadership behaviors. These theoretical perspectives focus on leaders themselves and presume that leaders allocate resources evenly, while neglecting the process of and differences in leaders' interactions with employees. In fact, in management practices, a completely even distribution of resources is hard to find. Instead, leaders are often prone to making management decisions based on their different affinities and interest relationships

with their subordinates formed in the course of interpersonal interactions.

Challenging the basic assumptions of previous leadership theories, Graen and Dansereau (1972) first put forward the construct of LMX. They believe that leaders will form different affinities and interest relationships with subordinates, and that relevant studies should focus on the interrelations between leaders and employees. Liden and Graen (1980) also argued that the work process between leaders and employees is actually a process of social exchange. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), on the other hand, suggested that due to the constraints of time, energy and resources, leaders may adopt different management models for subordinates with different affinities in the course of management. This means that leaders will give more trust and care to employees who are close to them, or even have interpersonal interactions with these employees outside work relationships. These employees, who are given favorable resources by the leaders, often enjoy more material rewards, work autonomy and promotion opportunities, and are often referred to as "insiders". By contrast, the exchange between the rest of the employees and leaders is often limited to formal work relationships. Hence, they are referred to as "outsiders".

It has been pointed out that LMX is particularly evident in Chinese organizations (Yang, 2004). Although the concept of LMX was put forward by Western scholars on the basis of the reflections on Western organizational management, the construct can also provide a good explanation for the interpersonal relationships and management phenomena in Chinese organizations. Farh, Tsui, Xin, and Cheng (1998) also hold that interpersonal relationships in the Chinese context are extremely complex, and that in fact, leaders in Chinese organizations tend to classify their subordinates as "insiders" and "outsiders" in their management practices. In this context, LMX can help us better understand the psychology and behavior of employees in Chinese organizations.

Most scholars believe that LMX is present and prevalent in organizations. However, scholars have their own focus in their definitions of LMX and are yet to reach a complete consensus. Specifically, Liden (1997) considers LMX as exchange relationships established between employees and their leaders, and the quality of the relationships is measured primarily through the exchange of material resources, life support, amount of information

and level of effort between the two parties. Yu and Liang (2002), on the other hand, define LMX as relationships between employees and leaders that go beyond the formal work relationships. They argue that it is necessary to determine whether an employee is a member of a circle by comparing the marginal benefits that the employee receives from the exchange relationship with the leader to the marginal cost of maintaining the relationship. In other words, it is necessary to measure whether quality LMX relationships are established between employees and leaders. Although descriptions of the connotations differ, most scholars agree that the essence of the concept of LMX is that leaders and employees will form two different types of exchange relationships, namely, high-quality exchange relationships and low-quality exchange relationships. And due to the different exchange relationships, leaders will adopt different management styles. The main difference is whether the scope of LMX relationships is limited to work-related or extends beyond work relationships to social exchange relationships (Ren & Wang, 2005).

2.3.2 Brief review on LMX

The existing literature of relevance has explored the important influence of LMX on the formation of employee work attitudes and externalization of behavioral performance. A lot of research results are available. Yet only a few studies focus on the antecedents of LMX. Still, there are some research results. The studies and research results on the antecedents of LMX are summarized below.

(1) Studies on the antecedents of LMX

Studies on the factors that can influence the formation of LMX relationships cover a wide scope. Liden (1997) argues that the antecedents of LMX can be discussed from four aspects, namely, employee characteristics, leader characteristics, leader-employee alignment and situational factors. As shown in Table 2-1, existing relevant research findings can be broadly classified into four categories, namely, employee characteristics, leader characteristics, interactive variables between leaders and employees, as well as situational variables. Specifically, employee characteristics mainly consist of three types: First, employees' attitude and cognitive variables represented by abilities, emotions and

personality, such as employees' self-assessment ability, political skills, control points, negative emotions and proactive personality (Yu, Hou, & He, 2016; Xue, Zhang, Ding, & Sha, 2016); second, employees' behavioral variables, such as upward influence behavior and ingratiating behavior (Dockey, 1990); and third, other variables such as employees' social network structure position (Gao, 2016). In terms of leadership characteristics, with the development of research on specific leadership styles, a large number of studies have explored the significant effects of different leadership styles such as paternalistic leadership, inclusive leadership, moral leadership and spiritual leadership on LMX. And there are also studies that proceed from leadership behavior, exploring the mechanisms by which leaders' specific behavior such as paradoxical leadership behavior and ethical leadership behavior influence LMX. Besides, there are also studies that focus on the role of leadership characteristics such as improper supervision and developmental feedback from superiors on LMX (Xiao & Zhao, 2017; Su & Lin, 2019). The interactive variables between leaders and employees mainly include the similarities between leaders and employees in such aspects as education, cognition, attitudes, perceptions, and personality. Specifically, some studies have examined the significant influence of such variables as ethical tendency matching, implicit leadership/ followership prototype matching, and subordinate-supervisor matching on LMX (Yuan & Li, 2017; Zhang & Gu, 2017); situational variables include such ones as scope of leadership control, size of organization, work atmosphere, workgroup cohesion, organizational socialization strategies and HRM (Aryee & Chen, 2006; Hu & Chen, 2016).

Table 2-1 Studies on the antecedents of LMX

Variable category	Antecedent	Author(s) (Year)
Employee characteristics	Self-assessment ability	Snyder & Bruning (1985)
	Political skills	Xue *et al.* (2016)
	Control points	Martain & Thomas (2005)
	Capabilities and negative emotions	Day & Crain (1992)
	Proactive personality	Qin & Liu (2014)

Variable category	Antecedent	Author(s) (Year)
Employee characteristics	Upward influence behavior	Dockey (1990)
	Ingratiating behavior	Fairhurst & Chandler (1989)
	Social network structure position	Gao (2016)
Leadership characteristics	Paternalistic leadership	Wu, Zhang, & Li (2018)
	Inclusive leadership	Peng *et al.* (2017)
	Moral leadership	Wei, Song, & He (2017)
	Spiritual leadership	Qiu, Meng, & Yang (2019)
	Paradoxical leadership behavior	Jiang, Zhang, & Qin (2019)
	Ethical leadership behavior	Xiao & Zhao (2017)
	Improper supervision	Yu, Zhao, & Jiang (2014)
Interactive variables between leaders and employees	Developmental feedback from superiors	Su & Lin (2019)
	Ethical tendency matching	Yuan & Li (2017)
	Implicit leadership/followership prototype matching	Kong, Yuan, & Qian (2019)
	Subordinate-supervisor matching	Zhang & Gu (2017)
	Scope of leadership control	Green, Blank, & Liden (1983)
	Size of organization	Graen (1996)
Situational variables	Work atmosphere	Aryee & Chen (2006)
	Workgroup cohesion	Cogliser & Schriesheim (2000)
	Organizational socialization strategies	Hu & Chen (2016)
	Supportive HR practices	Chen *et al.* (2013)
	High performance work system	Miao *et al.* (2013)

It is particularly noteworthy that in the context of Chinese organizations, most studies on the situational variables that affect LMX focus on the impact of HRM practices in organizations on LMX. For example, Chen *et al.* (2013) studied the impact of supportive HR practices consisting of four types, namely, decision making participation, internal promotion, on-the-job training and fair pay on LMX. They believe that the higher the level of supportive HR practices in an organization, the more conducive it is for leaders and employees to form perceptions of quality LMX, thereby contributing to the formation of harmonious relationships. Miao, Zhou, Liu, and Li (2013) carried out an empirical study of small and medium-sized private enterprises in China and identified a positive association between high-performance work systems and employees' LMX. Hu and Chen (2016) argued that managers, as the socialization agents of enterprises, can enhance LMX relationships through such socialization strategies as training and coaching of employees. And they established the association between the two dimensions of organizational socialization strategy, namely, institutionalization strategy and personalization strategy, and employees' perceptions of LMX.

(2) The outcomes of LMX

To date, most relevant studies focus on exploring the structural dimensions of the concept of LMX and the implications it may have on organizations and individuals. LMX emphasizes the exchange relationships established between employees and their supervisors. From a conceptual point of view, LMX should be able to effectively predict employee performance (Ren & Wang, 2005). Empirical studies have shown that the important impact of LMX on employees is mainly reflected in the cognitive attitudes and behavioral outcomes of employees. As shown in Table 2-2, in terms of cognitive attitudes, a large number of studies have found that high-quality LMX relationships can help enhance employees' perceptions of work, reflected in such aspects as the sense of professional mission, job satisfaction, engagement and job-related well-being. They can also significantly and positively predict employees' perceptions of such work attitude variables as organizational support, organizational commitment, job involvement, insider identity perception, organizational identification and leadership identification (Ren & Wang, 2005; Zhang, Jin,

& Jiang, 2017; Wu & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Gu, 2017; Jiang, 2019). Besides, Wu and Zhang (2017) found through their study that high-quality LMX is conducive to slow down the process of emotional depletion of employees; Xiao and Zhao (2017) validated the negative correlation between LMX and the turnover intention of employees. Specifically, low-quality LMX relationships lead to an increase in the turnover intention of employees.

Table 2-2 Studies on the outcome variables of LMX

Type of variable	Outcome variable	Author(s) (Year)
Such variables as attitudes and cognition	Sense of professional mission	Zhang et al. (2017)
	Job satisfaction	Major (1995); Mayfield (1998) Jiang et al. (2019)
	Dedication	Shi et al. (2019)
	Job-related well-being	Liang et al. (2019)
	Perceptions of organizational support	Wu & Zhang (2017)
	Organizational commitment	Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner (1995); Lee (2001); Gao (2016)
	Job involvement	Zhang & Gu (2017)
	Insider identity perception,	Chen & Aryee (2007); Wang, Chu, & Li (2009); Qian, Ding, Kong, & Wu (2015)
	Organizational identification and leadership identification	Tu & Li (2012)
	Emotional depletion	Lu & Sun (2016); Wu & Zhang (2017)
	Turnover intention	Li & Chen (2010); Xiao & Zhao (2017)

Type of variable	Outcome variable	Author(s) (Year)
Such variables as behavior and outcomes	Job performance	Mayfield & Mayfield (1998); Townsend, Silva, Mueller, & Tetrick (2002); Jiang *et al.* (2019)
	Relationship performance	Xu *et al.* (2018)
	Innovation performance	Qiu *et al.* (2019)
	Career success	Yang *et al.* (2018)
	Work-family balance	Lin, Wang, Hao, & Li (2016)
	Employee creativity	Peng *et al.* (2017); Huang, Huang, & Peng (2018)
Such variables as behavior and outcomes	Organizational citizenship behavior	Townsend *et al.* (2002); Hackett, Farh, Song, & Lapierre (2003); Wang *et al.* (2005); Tang *et al.* (2016); Kong *et al.* (2019)
	In-role behavior	Kong *et al.* (2019)
	Innovative behavior	Jiang (2019)
	Unethical pro-organizational behavior	Zhang *et al.* (2019)
	Employees' silent behavior	Zhang (2017)

In terms of behavioral outcomes, most scholars believe that LMX has a positive impact on employee performance. For example, Jiang (2019) found that LMX mediates the significantly positive impact of paradoxical leadership behavior on employees' job satisfaction and job performance, thus establishing the significant positive impact of LMX on employee job performance. Besides, scholars have examined the positive impact of LMX on such aspects as employee relationship performance and innovation performance (Xu, Gao, Kang, & Su, 2018; Qiu *et al.*, 2019). Some scholars also put forward that high-quality LMX promotes employees' career success, helps employees achieve work-family balance, and has

a positive impact on employee creativity. As to work behaviors, a large number of studies have found that high-quality LMX motivates employees to exhibit behaviors that are beneficial to organizations, such as organizational citizenship behavior, in-role behavior, innovative behavior, employee creativity and unethical pro-organizational behavior. And it is without doubt that LMX tends to have a significantly negative predictive effect on employees' silent behavior that are detrimental to organizational development (Zhang, 2017; Zhang, Jiang, & Li, 2019; Kong *et al.*, 2019).

2.3.3 Dimensions and measurement of LMX

As to the dimensions and measurements of LMX, scholars have built unidimensional and multidimensional structures of LMX and developed different measurement scales.

In terms of the unidimensional structure, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) defined LMX only in terms of work-related aspects, and they constructed the unidimensional structure out of the belief that LMX reflects the good or bad work relationships between leaders and employees. Most unidimensional constructs of LMX see it as a continuum that shifts from out-group exchange to in-group exchange. In other words, the degree of change from low quality to high quality is continuous and uninterrupted. From the unidimensional perspective, scholars have developed different scales to measure LMX.

In fact, it is difficult to explicitly limit leader-employee interactions to work scenarios. The process of establishing a hierarchical exchange relationship is actually a process of role acquisition for both parties, whereas the role theory exactly emphasizes that "roles are multidimensional". Dienesch and Liden (1986) argue that LMX involves three dimensions, namely, affect, contribution and loyalty. After that, Liden and Maslyn (1998) added a fourth dimension of professional respect based on the methodology of key events interview. Specifically, affect refers to the "mutual affection within the dyad based on interpersonal attraction" rather than work or expertise; contribution is defined as the amount, direction and quality of "work-oriented activity each member of dyad puts forth toward mutual goals"; loyalty refers to the "expression of public support for the goals and character of the other dyad member"; and professional respect refers to "perceptions of each dyad member's

reputation for excelling at his/her work". Furthermore, they identified a moderate correlation between these four dimensions, namely, affect, contribution, loyalty and professional respect, indicating that these four dimensions can be distinguished in not only theory but also practice. Most of the other multidimensional structures have been developed and constructed on this basis, and corresponding measurement scales have been developed.

Some of the dimensions and measurements of LMX are listed in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3 Dimensions and measurement of LMX

Dimension	Author (Year)	Content	Measurement scale
Single dimension	Scandura & Graen (1984)	Mutual trust determines high-quality relationships. From low quality to high quality	LMX-7 (7 items)
	Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995)		
Two dimensions	Wakabayashi & Graen (1984)	Talent and trust	Vertical exchange scale (12 items)
	Bauer & Green (1996)	Trust and respect	LMX (8 items)
Three dimensions	Dienesch & Liden (1986)	Affect, contribution, loyalty	LMX (6 items)
	Blau (1988)	Contribution, understanding, support	Relationship quality (3 items)
Four dimensions	Keller & Dansereau (1995)	Trust, free contribution, loyalty, freedom	LMX (5 items)
	Liden & Maslyn (1998)	Affect, contribution, loyalty and professional respect	LMX-MDM (12 items)

2.4 Organizational identification

2.4.1 Connotations of organizational identification

Organizational identification, which has been a topic of focus in the field of organizational behavior research, originates from social identity and cultural identity in social psychology. Social identity refers to an individual's perceptions of such aspects of an organization as membership, values and emotional connection. Cultural identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging and inner commitment to the culture and cultural group to which he or she belongs, and it is a social psychological process of maintaining and updating their own cultural attributes. According to Yang (2002), human beings have the needs for two types of identification in social life: One is to gain self-identification by identifying the differences between "me" and "us", and the other is to gain social identification by identifying the differences between "us" and "them". The former allows an individual to acquire a consistency that is identical to the rest, while the latter allows the individual to acquire a uniqueness that is different from the rest. In order to meet both needs, individuals are always seeking a balance between the two.

The research on organizational identification has gone through a relatively long history of development. Its concept definition can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s, when Simon (1947) first described and explored the concept of organizational identification. Currently, the concept of organizational identification widely accepted and cited in academia is the one put forward by Simon and March (1958), who define organizational identification as individuals' perceptions of certain groups or the unity of belonging to certain groups. This definition has had a broad and far-reaching impact on the study of organizational identification. Since then, a large number of scholars have built on this basis to define organizational identification differently from their respective research perspectives.

A review of relevant literature reveals that the different definitions of organizational identification by foreign scholars can mainly be summarized into three perspectives, namely, cognitive perspective, affective perspective and sociological perspective. From the cognitive perspective, Albert and Whetten (1985) define organizational identification as organization

members' belief that the organization they belong to has core, unique and enduring characteristics; From the same perspective, Ashforth and Mael (1989) regard organizational identification as the concept of measuring whether there is alignment between employees and organizations in terms of values. They argue that organizational identification describes the process by which employees perceive a sense of belonging and membership in the organization. The definition has been widely adopted and used in relevant studies. From the affective perspective, O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1986) hold that organizational identification is a certain kind of affective self-definition of the individual members of an organization. This self-definition is based on the degree of attraction to the organization and the expectations for the organization. From the sociological perspective, Tajfel (1982) defines organizational identification as the self-definition of individuals as a result of perceiving their organizational membership. This perception of membership within an organization motivates members to develop an affective sense of belonging and attachment to the organization, and to form values that are consistent with the values of the organization. In addition, Rink and Ellemers (2007) argue that organizational identification, as a special form of social identification, reflects individuals' perceptions of their belonging to an organization. Mael and Tetrick (1992) also point out that when members develop a higher sense of identification with an organization, they develop a sense of their own subordination to that group.

Chinese scholars took a late start in studying the connotations of organizational identification, but have still achieved relatively fruitful results. A large number of scholars have defined organizational identification from different perspectives. For example, Bao and Xu (2006) hold that organizational identification reflects the process of employees' acquisition of self-identification from their organizations based on their own standards, and it in turn reflects the relationship between employees' self-concepts and organizations. Wei, Chen, and Zhang (2007) define organizational identification as a self-construal of individuals. It is the result of individuals' cognition and internalization of organizational values, as well as the affective attachment that individuals unintentionally show in terms of such aspects as the sense of belonging. Xi and Hui (2010) studied the content structure of

organizational identification with the employees of Chinese family enterprises as participants. They define organizational identification as the relationship between organization members' self-concepts and their organizations, and such self-concepts are closely related to individuals' perceptions of organizational membership.

Overall, the connotations of organizational identification can be summarized in the following two aspects. One is to emphasize members' perceptions and affirmation of their identities in organizations from their self-concepts, namely, the self that an employee experiences from the organization; the other is to emphasize the relationships between members' self-concepts and the organizations. The definition of organizational identification by Ashforth and Male (1989) based on the social identity theory is by far the most sophisticated. They believe that organizational identification reflects the alignment between individuals and organizations in terms of values, and describes the cognitive process of individuals' sense of membership and belonging to organizations.

2.4.2 Brief review on organizational identification

In recent years, organizational identification has been a popular topic in related research fields. A large number of studies have explored the antecedents and outcome variables of organizational identification in depth. And they are summarized below.

(1) Studies on the antecedents of organizational identification

Many scholars have studied in depth the individual factors, job characteristic factors, leadership factors and organizational factors that influence organizational identification. As shown in Table 2-4, individual factors include employees' term of service, such attitudinal factors as employee satisfaction and positive emotions, interpersonal relationships, personality traits and such psychological factors as psychological contract. With regard to the specific influence each factor has on the organizational identification of employees, Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn (1995) found that the longer-term employees serve, the stronger their organizational identification is. Regarding the Chinese organizational situation, Liu and Lu (2010) also put forward that the levels of employees' organizational identification at different stages of their service term differ significantly. Mael and Ashforth (1992) pointed

out that individuals' sentimental dispositions and job satisfaction have a significant impact on their organizational identification. Wei (2009) also validated the positive impact of employees' positive emotions on organizational identification by studying knowledge-based employees. In terms of interpersonal relationships, positive interpersonal relationships help employees identify in organizations beliefs and values that are highly compatible with their own, which in turn contributes to the formation of quality group relations and enhance organizational attractiveness (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986). With regard to personality traits, Johnson and Morgeson (2005) found that extraversion out of the "Big Five Personality Factors" has a positive impact on individuals' organizational identification, while neuroticism has a negative impact. Qiu (2016) also reached a consistent conclusion. She validated the positive effects of extroversion and agreeableness out of the Big Five personality traits on individuals' organizational identification as well as the negative effects of neuroticism in the context of Chinese organizations. As to individual psychology, psychological contract is a very important research variable and this concept is mainly expressed in the subjective agreement of responsibilities and obligations between employees and organizations. When the psychological contract is breached, individuals tend to place the importance of personal interests above the interests of organizations, which leads to psychological alienation from organizations. In other words, breach of the psychological contract leads to a significant decrease in individuals' levels of organizational identification (Epitropaki, 2003).

Table 2-4 Studies on the antecedents of organizational identification

Variable type	Antecedent	Author(s) (Year)
Individual factors	Length of service	Bhattacharya *et al.* (1995); Liu & Lu (2010)
	Job satisfaction	Mael & Ashforth (1992)
	Positive emotions	Wei (2009)
	Interpersonal relationships	Brown *et al.* (1986); Morgan *et al.* (2004); Wang (2007)

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Variable type	Antecedent	Author(s) (Year)
Individual factors	Personality traits	Johnson & Morgeson (2005)
	Psychological contract	Robinson & Rousseau (1994); Kreiner & Ashfiorth (2004); Epitropaki (2003)
Job characteristic factors	Work boundary strength	Wang *et al.* (2016)
	Employee socialization	Ge & Su (2010)
	Workplace bullying	Du *et al.* (2017)
	Superior-subordinate guanxi	Li & Chen (2015); Zhong *et al.* (2018)
Leadership factors	Self-sacrificing leadership	Cao, Wang, & Song (2019)
	Paternalistic leadership	Wu *et al.* (2018)
	Transformational leadership	Li & Mao (2018)
Organizational factors	Organizational external image	Mael & Ashforth (1992); Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail (1994); Iyer, Bamber, & Barefield (l997); Dukerich, Golder, & Shortell (2002)
	Organizational reputation	Mael & Ashforth (1992); Ashforth & Mael (1989); Dukerich *et al.* (2002); Smidts *et al.* (2001); Wei (2009)
	Organizational culture	Schrodt (2002); Wang (2007); He & Ling (2008)

Variable type	Antecedent	Author(s) (Year)
Organizational factors	Organizational atmosphere (such as organizational communication atmosphere and organizational psychological atmosphere)	Smidts *et al.* (2001); Zhu *et al.* (2019)
	Organizational support	Liu & Li (2016)
	Organizational justice	Benkhoff (1997); Morgan *et al.* (2004)
	Organizational trust	Liu *et al.* (2016)
	HRM practices (such high-performance HR practices and supportive HRM)	Li & Wei (2011); Wang & Sun (2011); Chen *et al.* (2018)

Job characteristics factors and leadership factors also affect employees' organizational identification to varying degrees. Job characteristic factors are mainly related to work boundaries, organizational socialization and workplace bullying. Wang, Liu, and Lin (2016) found that work boundaries, as a way to distinguish employees' work from non-work aspects such as space, time and psychology, have a significant impact on employees' organizational identification. Specifically, there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between the strength of job boundaries and employees' organizational identification. Either too strong or too weak

job boundaries will lead to lower levels of organizational identification. Ge and Su (2010) studied the effect of the socialization process where new employees need to learn and experience in order to adapt to specific organizational roles on their organizational identification and found that history, language, values and goal socialization all have significantly positive influences on employees' organizational identification. Du, Zhu, and Xu (2017) examined the impact of workplace bullying, a negative phenomenon at work, on employees' organizational identification, and found that the presence of workplace bullying interferes with employees' four basic needs, namely, the need for belonging, the need for self-esteem, the need for control and the need for a meaningful existence, thus having a significantly negative predictive effect on employees' organizational identification. Studies on leadership factors mainly focus on the superior-subordinate relationships that employees establish with their leaders and the important influences that different specific leadership styles have on employees' organizational identification. For example, Zhong, Wang, Luo, and Song (2018) found that stronger superior-subordinate relationships can ultimately increase employees' organizational identification by satisfying employees' such motivations as uncertainty reduction motivation and self-esteem needs motivation. In addition, there are numerous studies that focus on the positive or negative effects of different leadership styles, such as paternalistic leadership, on employees' organizational identification (Wu *et al.*, 2018).

Organizational factors mainly include organizational image and reputation, organizational culture, organizational climate, organizational justice and HRM. The study by Mael and Ashforth (1992) showed that a positive organizational reputation is significantly associated with individuals' organizational identification, while a negative reputation may lead to individuals' alienation from organizations by maintaining a positive sense of self. Wei (2009) also validated the significantly positive predictive effect of organizational reputation on employees' organizational identification. In terms of organizational culture, Schrodt (2002) validated through empirical research the significant correlation between each of the six dimensions of organizational culture (teamwork, morality, information flow, involvement, supervision and meetings) and organizational identification. He and Ling (2008) also studied the influence of three different types of organizational cultures, namely,

supportive and encouraging type, innovative and cooperative type, as well as bureaucratic type, on the formation of employees' organizational identification. In terms of organizational atmosphere, Zhu, Huang, He, Du, and Ren (2019) found that in a high-level organizational psychological safety atmosphere, employees would recognize organizational membership more and thus show a higher level of organizational identification. In addition, there are also some studies dedicated to validating the effect mechanism and boundary conditions of organizational justice, organizational support and organizational trust on employees' organizational identification (Liu & Li, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, regarding the important impact of HRM on employees' organizational identification in the context of Chinese organizations, Li and Wei (2011) examined the positive impact of high-performance HR practices consisting of five components, namely, personnel selection, extensive training, internal mobility, results-oriented appraisals and incentive compensation on employees' organizational identification. Different from other studies that focus on employees' perceptions of HR practices, Wang and Sun (2011) examined the cross-level effects of HRM practices at the organizational level on employees' individual organizational identification and validated a positive correlation between the two. Chen, Chen, and Jin (2018) found that supportive HRM practices, which consist of such practical activities as employee engagement, fairness in rewards, growth and training, support from supervisors and employment security, derived from the three elements of career development, welfares and training can significantly and positively predict employees' organizational identification.

(1) Studies on the outcome variables of organizational identification

In terms of the outcome variables of organizational identification, organizational identification will cause changes in the psychology and behavior of employees. Organizational identification often means that an employee holds a high degree of recognition of the organization's characteristics, values, norms and goals, and thereby forming a strong psychological bond with the organization. This perception often leads to positive effects on the individual and the organization (Shen & Liu, 2016). As shown in Table 2-5, the outcome variables of organizational identification can be divided into positive and

negative factors. In terms of positive factors, a high level of organizational identification helps to enhance such work attitudes as employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, loyalty, dedication, job-related well-being and job involvement (He & Ling, 2008; Guo & Xiao, 2017; Chen *et al.*, 2018). As to employees' behavioral performance, in workplace scenarios, employees with high degrees of organizational identification will think from the perspective of the organization, strive to contribute to group achievement, and exhibit more extra-role behaviors such as cooperative behaviors, helpful behaviors and knowledge-sharing behaviors on the basis of actively completing in-role behaviors (Li & Chen, 2015). Ge and Su (2010) conducted an empirical study based on Chinese technology manufacturing companies and also validated the positive impact of employees' organizational identification on their organizational citizenship behavior, which is an extra-role behavior. Zhong *et al.* (2018) argue that employees with higher levels of organizational identification tend to perform certain behaviors more aggressively even though such behaviors that are conducive to maintaining or increasing organizational benefits may be unethical. In other words, organizational identification can significantly and positively predict employees' such behaviors as unethical pro-organizational behavior. In addition, as to positive factors, there is also more research focused on the role of organizational identification in enhancing employee performance.

Table 2-5 Studies on outcome variables of organizational identification

Variable type	Outcome variable	Author (Year)
Positive factors	Job satisfaction	Dick *et al.* (2004); Michael, Harris, & Bernerth (2006) Xiong, Zhang, & Xiong (2008)
	Organizational commitment	Bergami & Bagozzi (2000); Guo & Xiao (2017)
	Loyalty	Zhu & Yan (2006); Deng (2002); Dong & Wang (2008)

Variable type	Outcome variable	Author (Year)
Positive factors	Dedication	Li & Mao (2018)
	Job-related well-being	Chen *et al.* (2018)
	Job involvement	He & Ling (2008)
	Cooperative behavior	Dukerich *et al.* (2002); Tajfel (1982); Brewer (1979) Turner (1987); Bamber & Iyer (2002); Dukerich *et al.* (2002); Polzer (2004)
	Knowledge sharing behavior	Li & Chen (2015); Liu *et al.* (2016)
	Organizational citizenship behavior	Dukerich *et al.* (2002); Tajfel (1982); Turner (1987); Dutton *et al.* (1994); Bergami & Bagozzi (2000); Shen (2007); Guo (2007); Ge & Su (2010)
	Pro-organizational unethical behavior	Zhong *et al.* (2018); Cao *et al.* (2019)
	Job performance	Han (2007); Guo (2007); Qiu *et al.* (2019)
Negative factors	Turnover intention	Bamber & Iyer (2002); Xiong, Sun, & Gu (2008); Shen (2007); Yang & Li (2008); Wu *et al.* (2018); Liu & Li (2016)
	Workplace deviant behavior	Guo & Xiao (2017)

The negative aspects mainly include the turnover intention of employees and workplace deviant behavior. When individuals establish a strong psychological bond with an organization, they will see themselves and the organization as an interconnected community of shared future, resulting in positive work attitudes and behaviors beneficial to the organization. In other words, employees with higher levels of organizational identification

are more motivated to meet the needs of their organizations. Thus, organizational identification has a more significantly negative impact on some negative attitudes and behaviors that are detrimental to organizations (Wei *et al.*, 2007). With regard to the turnover intention of employees, the findings of the empirical study by Bamber and Iyer (2002) suggest that employees' organizational identification can significantly reduce individuals' turnover intention. Wu *et al.* (2018) and Liu and Li (2016) also validated the significantly negative predictive effect of employees' organizational identification on their turnover intention in the context of Chinese organizations. In addition, for counterproductive behavior and workplace deviant behavior that violate an organization's norms, policies or systems, and undermine the interests of the organization or members within the organization, individuals with high levels of organizational identification, with their mentality of sharing the organization's honor and disgrace as well as their tendency to maintain identification with the organization, tend to reduce behaviors that are detrimental to the organization. Guo and Xiao (2017) found that organizational identification has a significant inhibitory effect on both interpersonal-oriented deviant behavior and organizational-oriented deviant behavior.

2.4.3 Dimensions and measurement of organizational identification

As to the dimensions and measurement of organizational identification, Western scholars began relevant studies relatively early and their studies are more sophisticated. A large number of scholars have established unidimensional and multidimensional structures and developed corresponding measurement scales. (1) Unidimensional structure. Meal and Ashforth (1992) constructed a unidimensional structure of organizational identification from the affective perspective and developed a six-item scale, which is currently the most widely used means of measurement in organizational identification-related research. Smidts, Pruyn, and Van Riel (2001) also developed a five-item organizational identification scale for the unidimensional structure of organizational identification. The unidimensional structure of organizational identification has been questioned by some scholars, who argue that it is difficult for the affective dimension alone to fully explain the overall concept of organizational identification (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000). (2) Multidimensional structure.

For the multidimensional division of organizational identification, Cheney (1983) proposed three dimensions of organizational identification, namely, membership, loyalty and similarity based on previous research, and developed a highly cited scale. Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, and Christ (2004) built a four-dimensional structure of organizational identification, including cognitive, affective, evaluative and behavioral dimensions with reference to the dimensional structure of social identification.

Chinese scholars have also made useful exploration of the structure and measurement of organizational identification in the Chinese context. Wang (2007) proposed an organizational identification structure that consists of three dimensions, namely, attributive organizational identification, survival organizational identification and successful organizational identification, and developed a measurement scale. Xi and Hui (2010) conducted an empirical study on Chinese family enterprises and built a four-dimensional structure of organizational identification, including value identification, job identification, interpersonal identification and cultural identification. Furthermore, based on the Chinese organizational context, Sun and Jiang (2009) continuously detailed the connotations of organizational identification and constructed a nine-dimensional structure of organizational identification. The nine dimensions are respectively sense of belonging, organizational involvement, organizational attractiveness, identity perception, interpersonal relationships, individual-organizational consistency, gratitude and loyalty, membership similarity and contractual relationships.

2.5 Traditionality

2.5.1 Connotations of traditionality

Traditional Chinese culture, with its orientation of affection and rationality of values, has undergone a long history of deposits, and has influenced the values and ways of thinking of every member of society in the forms of consciousness and "collective unconsciousness" (Wang, 2000). These types of culture are in the DNA of the contemporary Chinese people, which necessitates the inclusion of traditional culture and its implications in the theoretical

framework of organizational management research in China. Particularly with regard to employee management issues, individuals have long been influenced by traditional Chinese culture, which significantly differs from Western culture in terms of attributes. So, employees' cognitive perceptions and behaviors tend to exhibit typical cultural characteristics. Traditionality is one of the most representative concepts describing the unique value orientation of individuals in the context of traditional Chinese culture (Zhang *et al.*, 2017).

In response to the modernization theory advocated by Western social scientists after World War II, scholars have pointed out that the cultural characteristics of traditional societies are still deeply rooted in modern societies. To respond to the concept of "modernity", scholars have put forward the concept of "traditionality" (Yang, Huang, & Yang, 2008). Indeed, with the accelerated pace of social modernization, the characteristics of modernity will evolve and gradually become dominant. Certain traditionality characteristics may be weakened, but they will still have an objective existence. In his study, Yang (2004) pointed out that the increase in the level of social modernization will not lead to the complete disappearance of traditional behaviors. Instead, individuals' traditionality will constantly blend in and adapt to the characteristics of modern life, resulting in unique and complex psychological and behavioral characteristics.

Yang *et al.* (1989) defined the concept of traditionality as the characteristic cognitive attitudes and behavioral patterns individuals form under the influence of traditional Chinese culture. Further, they described the five main aspects of individual traditionality, including submission to authority, filial piety and ancestral worship, conservation and endurance, fatalism and defensiveness, as well as male dominance. Each of these five aspects corresponds to the Confucian emperor-official, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother and friend-friend relationships. Specifically, the characteristic of submission to authority, which is formed as a result of the influence of a strictly hierarchical superior-subordinate culture in traditional culture, is considered the core of individual traditionality. The level of individual traditionality reflects an individual's acceptance of the hierarchical concept of the five ethics in the traditional culture. A higher level of traditionality means that

the individual is more deeply influenced by the traditional culture, and therefore has a higher degree of identification with the hierarchical concept of the five cardinal relationships (wu-lun), and thus a stronger sense of obedience. On this basis, Yang *et al.* (2008) further concretized the concept of traditionality by stating that individual traditionality is the most common set of cognitive attitudes, value orientations, temperament traits, individual thought concepts and behavioral characteristics that individuals form in traditional social life. In addition, Xie*,* Schaubroeck, and Lam (2008) also pointed out that traditionality is an expression of individual values. They defined traditionality as the level of acceptance of as well as commitment and adherence to social norms by individuals. Individuals with low levels of traditionality are more inclined to think out of the box, be free from the constraints of traditional values, and exhibit a lower level of acceptance of and adherence to social norms.

Regarding the role of traditionality in organizational management, Farh, Earley, and Lin (1997) first introduced the concept into the field of organizational management research. They believe that due to the influence of traditional Chinese culture, the most obvious manifestations of individual traditionality at work are the hierarchical relationships between superiors and subordinates and that employees often have to follow the norms and rules of "obeying orders from superiors" and "the distinction of leaders as superiors and members as inferiors". Therefore, when scholars apply the concept of traditionality in organizational management practices and use traditionality as an important variable to characterize employees' attitudinal perceptions and values, they mainly focus on the dimension of submission to authority, which is employees' degree of recognition of and submission to the hierarchy in the relationships of five ethics advocated by Confucianism. The degree of submission to authority in organizational context is mainly expressed in the degree of belonging to the organization as well as respect for and obedience to leaders. Employees who hold different levels of traditionality will show significant differences in such aspects as the formation of their work attitudes and behavioral patterns. Specifically, employees with high levels of traditionality have high degrees of identification with the role obligations of a traditional society. They tend to regard meeting their leaders' expectations as an obligation and responsibility in their work, and also tend to follow and implement the demands of their

leaders as unconditional and uncritical as possible. In contrast, employees with low levels of traditionality believe that they can have equal dialogues with their superiors, and tend to uphold the principle of pursuing a balance between giving and gaining in their work and life rather than psychologically recognizing the dominant position of their superiors (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007). Employees with low levels of traditionality are more likely to generate negative emotions and negative feedback when they are unfairly treated (Wang, Long, & Zhou, 2012). Furthermore, some scholars have pointed out that the concept of traditionality, which is mainly expressed in the recognition of and obedience to leadership authority and positions, has a high degree of similarity with the concept of power distance in Western culture (Wu, Liu, & Liu, 2009; Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004).

2.5.2 Relevant studies on traditionality

Not many of the previous studies have paid attention to the influencing factors and outcomes of individual traditionality. Instead, most studies focus on exploring the possible moderating effect that traditionality, which can reflect individual differences, may have when different factors act on employees' work attitudes and behavioral process. The studies on the antecedents and outcome variables of traditionality as well as its role as a moderator are summarized below.

(1) Studies on the antecedents of traditionality

The concept of traditionality is used to represent a set of common cognitive concepts, value orientations and behavioral traits that are formed by individuals due to the influences of traditional culture. The level of traditionality can vary significantly from one individual to another depending on the environment and atmosphere in which they were raised. Existing studies have found that employees of different genders, ages and geographical characteristics have different levels of traditionality. Xu and Cao (2000) found that the level of traditionality of males is higher than that of females, and that the differences in the level of traditionality between two genders may be influenced by geography. Zhang, Zheng, and Wang (2000) also explored in an empirical study the differences in individual traditionality in terms of gender and geography. Results of the study suggest that the level of traditionality of females is

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higher in rural areas than that in urban areas, while the level of traditionality of males is higher in urban areas than that in rural areas. In addition, generation and education can also affect the level of individual traditionality. In general, people belonging to different inter-generations also tend to have significant differences in their levels of traditionality, as evidenced by the higher levels of traditionality of the elder generations than the children and the higher levels of modernity of the children than the elder generations (Aykan & Wolf, 2000).

(2) Studies on the outcome variables of traditionality

There have not been many studies on the outcome variables of traditionality. Existing research on the possible impact of traditionality mainly focuses on the analysis of outcomes in individual lives and organizational situations.

In individual lives, traditionality may have an important impact on individuals' family perceptions and family interaction patterns. By studying the possible impact of individual traditionality on family values and family interaction patterns, Gao and Lu (2006) found that if the modernity of wife is higher than that of husband, or if the traditionality of husband is higher than that of wife, the marital adaptability between husband and wife tends to be poorer. In addition, in the family interaction patterns, an individual with a higher level of traditionality is more likely to live with the husband's parents after marriage and tends to show authoritative filial piety, while an individual with a higher level of modernity is more likely to show reciprocal filial piety in marriage.

With regard to organizational contexts, individual traditionality has important effects on work attitudes and behavior by way of influencing self-concepts. Existing research has found that such variables with characteristics of traditional Chinese culture, represented by traditionality, have an impact on employees' personal emotions, perceptions of work, formation of work attitudes, behavioral performance at work and job performance (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Wang, Lu, & Lu, 2014; He & Long, 2011; Zhou & Long, 2012; Yu, Fan, Zhang, & Men, 2015). With regards to the outcomes of the role of traditionality, existing studies have found that traditionality is a double-edged sword that can have both positive and negative effects in organizational contexts. In terms of positive effects, Farh *et al.* (2007)

found that individuals with higher levels of traditionality tend to exhibit higher levels of LMX and higher levels of insider identity perceptions, while also potentially generating higher levels of emotional commitment to organizations, which in turn leads to more organizational citizenship behaviors in the workplace, ultimately resulting in the positive outcome of improved job performance. Li, Liang, and Fu (2014) also pointed out that employees with high levels of traditionality will exhibit high levels of emotional commitment, prompting them to be less likely to exhibit silence behavior. While some scholars believe that traditionality is good for the growth and development of individual employees and organizations, others hold the opposite view. Zhang *et al.* (2017) argue that individuals with higher levels of traditionality may be more conservative in their behaviors. In other words, individuals with higher levels of traditionality may tend to avoid taking risks and reject challenging work assignments, resulting in lower openness to change and lower levels of innovation ability and creativity, which are not conducive to improvement of organizational innovation performance (Hon, 2014). Wang and Wang (2019) also suggest that employees with high levels of traditionality have a stronger need for a sense of security at work, and when their jobs are threatened, they are more inclined to respond negatively to avoid losses and thus less likely to offer constructive advice in the organization.

(3) Studies on the moderating effect of traditionality

In organizational contexts, employees with different levels of traditionality vary significantly in their ways of thinking and behavioral norms, which leads to different outcomes for employees with different levels of traditionality even in the face of relative organizational management events and contexts. Since Farh *et al.* (1997) introduced the concept of traditionality into organizational management research, a large number of scholars have conducted theoretical analyses and empirical exploration of the effectiveness of traditionality in explaining the differences in employees' work attitudes and behaviors (Hui *et al.*, 2004; Chen & Aryee, 2007; Wang & Wang, 2019). Seen from the connotations of traditionality, employees with low levels of traditionality tend to uphold the principle of incentive-contribution balance in terms of cognitive and behavioral patterns, rendering the influence of external factors on their work attitudes and behaviors more significant. In

comparison, employees with high levels of traditionality are less likely to have behavioral motivations due to external factors. Instead, they are more inclined to seek internal attribution, discipline their behaviors and perform their job tasks according to their roles.

Regarding the possible moderating effect of traditionality, Farh *et al.* (1997) introduced traditionality into the study of organizational management and made a comparison between traditionality and modernity. By conducting an empirical study in the Chinese context, they found that organizational justice has a significantly positive predictive effect on organizational citizenship behavior. And this positive predictive effect is stronger when employees have lower levels of traditionality and higher levels of modernity. Based on this, they concluded that traditionality will undermine the impact of external factors on individuals. Since then, a large number of scholars have explored and validated the moderating effect of traditionality. For example, Liu, Liu, and Ren (2007) validated the moderating effect of individual traditionality on the relationship between psychological contract and turnover intention in the Chinese context; Wu *et al.* (2009) explored the possible moderating effect of employee traditionality on the process where abusive management affects employee performance; Hui *et al.* (2004) examined the moderating effect of individual traditionality on the process of LMX in organizational citizenship behavior; Farh *et al.* (2007) examined the moderating role of traditionality in the relationship between organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior; Zhang *et al.* (2017) studied the moderating role of individual traditionality in the process where ethical leadership affects employee leadership identity; Wang and Wang (2019) studied the possible moderating effect of employee traditionality on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employees' constructive deviant behavior.

2.5.3 Dimensions and measurement of traditionality

Given that traditionality and modernity are a pair of contrasting and closely related concepts, Yang *et al.* (1989) constructed the multi-individual modernity scale and the multi-individual traditionality scale by adhering to the research strategy of indigeneity, separability, multi-scope and multi-dimension in their study. This traditional scale describes five aspects

of Chinese values, including the dimension of submission to authority that reflects the degree to which individuals obey, respect and rely on authority in different role relationships; the dimension of filial piety and ancestral worship that reflects the degree to which individuals respect their ancestors; the dimension of conservation and endurance reflecting individuals' characteristics such as conservativeness, submissiveness, humbleness and lack of a strong enterprising spirit; the dimension of fatalism and defensiveness reflecting a series of cognitive concepts and behavioral norms where individuals, out of the belief that their destiny is pre-determined, are content with what they have, tend to sweep the snow at their own doors regardless of the frost on others' tiles, and act out of their own interests such as using guanxi to seek jobs and seizing opportunities to rise and make a fortune; and the dimension of male dominance reflecting the idea that males are always superior to females.

The scale consists of 125 items in total, with 15 items for each dimension. The items cover a very broad and comprehensive scope. However, as the scale consists of too many items, it has limited practicability for empirical research. Moreover, some items of this multi-individual traditionality scale are not applicable in organizational contexts. Therefore, Farh *et al.* (1997), based on this scale, developed a traditionality scale with only five items to measure individuals' level of traditionality. This scale has been widely recognized and adopted by subsequent researchers due to its small number of items and simplified structure. And a large number of studies have confirmed its sound reliability and validity in measuring the traditionality of Chinese employees (Li, Yu, Yang, Qi, & Fu, 2014; Li, Ling, & Liu, 2012). In addition, Chen and Aryee (2007) developed a traditionality scale containing eight items based on the existing traditionality scale.

2.6 Turnover intention

2.6.1 Connotations of turnover intention

Employee turnover has been a topic of interest in the research fields of HRM and organizational behavior. Studies on employee turnover have a relatively long history and have achieved abundant research results. Definitions of employee turnover are available in

both the broad and the narrow senses. In the broad sense, employee turnover refers to the change in the status of an individual as a member of an organization (Price, 1977). This definition includes employee inflow into the organization, leaving the organization due to promotion, demotion or transfer, and employee outflow from the organization. In contrast, employee turnover in the narrow sense separates turnover from promotion, demotion or transfer of employees and considers employee turnover as a break in the employment relationships between organizations and employees. It emphasizes the process by which an employee no longer receives monetary material benefits from a certain organization, and is the process of terminating his/her relationship with the organization (Mobley 1982). Turnover intention, as an important predictive variable of employees' actual turnover behavior, has received widespread attention from scholars since it was put forward. There is a clear difference between employees' turnover intention and their actual turnover behavior. Turnover intention is just a thought where an employee, after having worked in an organization for some time, has an idea to leave the current organization to seek other job opportunities due to dissatisfaction with the current job or other reasons. Employees with turnover intention will not necessarily show turnover behavior. Scholars have come to a more consistent conclusion regarding the connotations of turnover intention. For example, Porter and Steers (1973) believe that turnover intention is the psychological intention of employees to choose to escape after experiencing negative emotions. Mobley (1977), also proceeding from the perspective of negative emotion, argues that employees will form turnover intention after experiencing dissatisfaction and grievance at work. And the formation of this intention usually includes such steps as generating the idea of leaving, seeking external job opportunities, as well as evaluating and comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the current job with alternative job opportunities. When these steps are completed, employees will form either high or low turnover intention, and turnover intention is the last step for employees to show turnover behavior. The definition of turnover intention by Mobley *et al.* (1978) also basically includes such elements as dissatisfaction, psychological withdrawal and seeking external job opportunities. They define the turnover intention of employees as a chain of comprehensive psychological manifestations including psychological withdrawal and the intention to leave after experiencing dissatisfaction and

grievance at work, evaluation of the possibility of finding alternative jobs, and seeking new jobs through multiple channels. Price (2001) also pointed out that turnover intention covers many psychological aspects such as employees' emotions, desires, attitudes and intrinsic motivations for turnover behavior. Overall, most scholars agree that turnover intention is the best and most direct antecedent for predicting employee turnover behavior, and it is the last psychological stage before an employee shows turnover behavior.

2.6.2 Relevant studies on turnover intention

Turnover intention is the last stage before an employee decides to leave and is the most important variable in predicting actual turnover behavior. Existing research has extensively studied the factors influencing turnover intention and has produced relatively abundant results. Scholars have found that a large number of individual, organizational and job factors can have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees.

Individual factors mainly include demographic characteristics, personality as well as individuals' attitudes and behaviors. For example, Zeffane (1994) found in his study that individual employees' gender, intelligence, age, ability, interest, term of service and personal experiences all have a significant impact on turnover intention. Cui (2003) conducted a survey of a large number of employees in Chinese SOEs and foreign enterprises, and found that individual characteristic variables such as gender, marital status, hukou (registered permanent residence), age, education background and regional origin have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees. Yuan, Ding, and Li (2014) found through a survey of over 200 knowledge-based employees in enterprises that the career growth of knowledge-based employees is negatively correlated with their turnover intention. Zhao and Xi (2017) studied the effect of emotional labor on the turnover intention of employees from the perspective of resource preservation theory and found that superficial acting significantly and positively predicts the turnover intention of employees, while deep acting significantly and negatively predicts the turnover intention of employees.

Organizational factors mainly consist of leadership styles as well as such organizational characteristic variables as organizational climate, organizational justice and organizational

support. As to the impact of leadership styles on the turnover intention of employees, domestic and international studies have discussed the specific effect mechanisms of various leadership styles such as transformational, affective, ethical, empowering and humble leadership (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Su *et al.*, 2018). Tourani *et al.* (2016) validated the negative correlation between organizational justice and the turnover intention of employees through empirical research. Cheng and Lin (2017) explored the relationship between the consistency of organizational support before and after employment and the turnover intention of millennial employees, and found that the more consistent the expected organizational support is with the perceived organizational support, the lower the turnover intention of millennial employees. Wang, Mai, and Li (2017) analyzed the significant influence of organizational justice climate on the turnover intention of employees from the perspectives of stakeholder theory and business ethics theory and found that organizational justice climate significantly and negatively affects the turnover intention of employees. Zhang, Peng, and Chen (2016) explored the influence of organizational socialization strategies on the turnover intention of R&D personnel in the context of Chinese culture and found that the implementation of institutionalized organizational socialization strategies would reduce the turnover intention of newly recruited R&D personnel.

Job factors consist of job environment, job characteristics and job interactions. Zeffane (1994) found through research that job environment, job expectations, wage levels and job satisfaction all have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees. Ye, Ni, and Huang (2015) found in their study that both workplace ostracism and marginalization have a positive effect on turnover intention, and that co-worker ostracism has a greater effect on turnover intention than supervisor ostracism, while workplace ostracism could also reinforce employees' feelings of marginalization. Su *et al.* (2018) found through empirical studies of industrial workers that cognitive, task and relational remodeling in job remodeling can significantly reduce industrial workers' turnover intention.

In addition, it is particularly noteworthy that an increasing amount of research in recent years has focused on exploring the mechanisms by which HRM practices in organizations influence the turnover intention of employees. For example, Ma and Trigo (2012) explored

the HRM models of Chinese subsidiaries of US, European and Japanese multinational companies and found that the perceptions of internal HRM can significantly predict the turnover intention of employees. Specifically, the more positive employees' perceptions of internal HRM of the organization, the lower their levels of turnover intention. Mary and Carol (2013) distinguished HR practices for Chinese employees into three aspects, namely, performance appraisal, organizational reward and employee development, and explored the mechanism of their influence on the turnover intention of employees respectively. It has been found through research that performance appraisal and organizational rewards can reduce the turnover intention of employees by increasing their fit with the organization, while employee development will increase employees' perception of sacrificing for the organization, which leads to increased turnover intention. After that, Ma *et al.* (2016) proposed in their study that the HR practices in the Chinese context are a mixture of committed HR practices and controlled HR management. On this basis, they further validated the important influence of HR practices in MNCs and local firms in the Chinese context on the turnover intention of employees. It was found that committed rather than controlled HRM practices perceived by employees in MNCs will significantly and negatively predict their turnover intention, while controlled rather than committed HRM practices perceived by employees in local firms significantly and negatively predict their turnover intention. Besides, there is also a lot of local research studying the association between HRM practices and the turnover intention of employees. Zhang and Sun (2011) explored the link between HRM practices in a broad sense and the turnover intention of employees, establishing a negative correlation between the two. For example, He *et al.* (2011) defined HR practices consisting of career development, training development and performance feedback as developmental HR practices and proposed that developmental HR practices can significantly reduce the turnover intention of employees by providing them with a sense of organizational support; Yan *et al.* (2017) found through empirical research that employees' perceived high-performance work systems can effectively reduce their burnout and thus negatively predict their turnover intention. In addition, some literature studied specific industry groups. For example, Qiao, Guo, and Zheng (2006) studied high-tech enterprises and found that internal developmental HRM systems are more helpful than

market-oriented HRM systems to reduce employee turnover; Mao and Zeng (2017) examined the impact of high-performance HRM characterized by a combination of commitment-based and control-based HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees in China's new economy and traditional industries; Ma *et al.* (2019) studied industrial workers in manufacturing enterprises and found that employee-oriented HR practices can significantly reduce the turnover intention of employees by facilitating their career growth.

2.6.3 Measurement of turnover intention

Most existing studies view turnover intention as a one-dimensional construct. As scholars have a consensus on the connotations of turnover intention and the concept of turnover intention is relatively simple and clear, most of the scales developed to measure turnover intention have a simplified structure and are simple and easy to use. The academia has reached a relatively unanimous view on the measurement of turnover intention, and most scales measuring turnover intention have been repeatedly proven to be effective. Mobley *et al.* (1978) were the first to construct a one-dimensional structure of turnover intention, and developed a scale with a total of four items, including two forward scoring items (for example, "I am often bored with my current job and want to change to a new organization") and two reverse scoring items (for example, "I have hardly considered leaving my current organization"). Since then, a large number of scholars have modified and adjusted the scale, resulting in a large number of scales for measuring turnover intention. For example, Rosin & Korabik (1991) developed a four-item scale of turnover intention that measures employees' thoughts about turnover and their search for other job opportunities; Riordan, Weatherly, Vandenberg, and Self (2001) focused on measuring the turnover intention of employees by measuring their search for external job opportunities. An example of the measurement items is: "Are you currently actively searching for information about jobs outside the organization". This scale also includes four items. Based on the foreign scale of turnover intention, Chinese scholars Li and Li (2007) also designed their own turnover intention scale based on the context of Chinese organizations. Their scale consists of three items in total. In fact, a large number of turnover intention measurement scales are similar in their expression of meaning of the measured items. Specifically, they mainly measure such aspects as the turnover

intention of employees in terms of their thoughts about leaving the organization and search for external job opportunities.

2.7 Research hypotheses and theoretical model

2.7.1 Social exchange theory

The main idea of social exchange theory is that individuals tend to associate their efforts and contributions with some kind of reward they receive from their organizations, establishing an exchange relationship between the two. This theory is mainly used to explain the relationship known as "exchange" and process known as "transaction", as well as individuals' behavior of obtaining rewards from elsewhere. Such relationship, process and behavior tend to bear bilateral, interactive and reciprocal characteristics (Blau, 1964). The theory holds that each party will have something of value that the other party wants, and that when these things are exchanged, the subject and quantity of the exchange are determined by mutual agreement. The subject exchanged can be either economic or social resources, or both. Economic resources include tangible items such as goods, money, assets, information, advice and services, whereas social resources include intangible items such as greetings, friendship and prestige.

Blau (1964) proposed that human exchange behavior can be understood in terms of both economic exchange and social exchange. Economic exchange and social exchange have both similarity and their respective focus. The similarity lies in that both economic and social exchanges emphasize the expected future benefits of individual contributions made at the present. The difference lies in that an economic exchange is based on a contract that clearly sets out the quantity and quality of the exchange, and the parties to the exchange explicitly reach some kind of exchange agreement. In other words, the give-and-take in an economic exchange is clearer and more specific, and this form of exchange tends to be a short-term transaction that underlines equivalence. In comparison, in a social exchange, an individual's give-and-take is often unclear and not specified by a contract. In a social exchange relationship, each party trusts the other party to fulfill their long-term obligations. The

exchange is an individual's voluntary act based on trust and motivated by the need to obtain a reward, and the exchange usually sustains the deal for a long time.

Social exchange theory holds that the principle of social interactions between people or interpersonal relationships is the exchange of economic and social benefits based on "rewards" and "costs" (Blau, 1964), which is essentially a reciprocal relationship between people, with "obligations" and "responsibilities" constituting the driving force of human exchange behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When one party to an exchange gives grace, love, help, care and support to the other party, the other party feels responsible and obliged to reciprocate. With this reciprocity going back and forth, a reciprocal balance of spiritual and material exchange is reached between people, which sustains and harmonizes interpersonal interactions. Social exchange theory is widely applied in research related to organizational management scenarios. It plays a relatively prominent role in explaining organizational scenario factors and the formation of employees' work attitudes, stimulation of work motivations and performance of work behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Su & Lin, 2019).

2.7.2 Guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention

Guanxi has always been a prevailing cultural phenomenon in the Chinese society. Under the edification and influence of traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucian culture, the Chinese people attach great importance to ethics, thus allowing the culture of guanxi to take deep roots and run a long history in China (Zhang & Wang, 2014). The role of guanxi in Chinese organizations and its practice management should not be overlooked. Proceeding from reflections on guanxi, scholars have developed the concept of guanxi practice. Guthrie (1998) states that guanxi practice refers to the use of guanxi as a tool for purposeful social exchange to achieve the creation of favors or the achievement of a certain purpose. Chen *et al.* (2004) further point out that managers are influenced by the quality of their guanxi with their subordinates in the HR decision-making process. For this reason, they define guanxi HRM practice as an organization's performance in such aspects as hiring, job assignment, compensation, promotion and performance appraisal influenced by private

guanxi. Existing studies suggest that in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts, if organizational managers take their own interests more into account when making decisions or allocating resources or seek to benefit others based on their personal relationships with them, employees will perceive reduced levels of procedural justice, experience significantly decreased trust in managers and the organization, as well as suffer negative impacts on their job satisfaction (Chen *et al.*, 2004; Fu *et al.*, 2019).

However, there may be significant differences in guanxi HRM practices perceived by individuals between the Chinese and Western cultural contexts (Zhang *et al.*, 2014). In Western cultures, individuals define and perceive themselves outside of social roles and relationships, and they believe that moral ethics and social order have consistent and identical requirements on each individual. The organizational justice emphasized in Western management theories originates from individuals' belief in and pursuit of the abstract concept of justice, while the law of justice applies to all subjects of behavior and has the characteristic of consistency across contexts (Wang & Zheng, 2007). Therefore, there should be a degree of convergence in employees' perceptions and evaluations of guanxi HRM practices in Western organizations (Fan *et al.*, 2014). Comparatively, Chinese people have always valued human connections and guanxi. Chinese people tend to base their approach to problems on the other party's affinity to them. And this national cultural characteristic tends to be brought into organizations by employees, thus influencing the interpersonal interactions and resource allocation patterns in organizations.

According to Hwang (1987), in Chinese culture, individuals define themselves according to their social roles and classify others' relationships with them as affective, mixed and instrumental according to the degree of affinity, and the laws of exchange applicable to these relationships are respectively the law of demand (applied to family conflicts), the law of human connection (applied to human connection dilemmas) and the law of equity (applied to objective decision-making). In other words, individuals tend to adopt the laws of reason and justice for groups most distant from them. Similarly, in organizations, as relationships with colleagues can be classified into different types based on the degree of affinity from intimacy to alienation, individuals also hold different evaluations and criteria for different

groups, hence the concept of "circle". This results in significant differences in employees' perceptions and evaluations of the same guanxi HRM practice. Based on this, this study uses the guanxi HRM practices perceived by employees to further explore management phenomena in the context of Chinese culture.

How guanxi serves "employment" and "retention" strategies in HRM practices has become an important issue for Chinese enterprises to focus on in an effort to address the employee turnover dilemma (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Guanxi HRM practices focus on the dynamic exchange relationships between managers and employees and can have a significant impact on employees' work attitudes (Weng, 2014). Guanxi HRM practices mean that managers will divide employees into groups based on their affinity to them and treat different groups of employees differently in management decisions. Employees are prone to negative emotions when they perceive a high level of guanxi HRM practices in the organization that causes performance rewards and resource allocation to be affected by guanxi (Chen *et al.*, 2011). According to differential pattern and circle culture, only a few employees in an organization are able to establish close exchange relationships with their managers (Shen, Zhu, Zhou, Zhang, & Liu, 2019). On the one hand, managers' preferential treatment in rewards and resources to a few employees with whom they have close relationships can render most employees who are distant from them less motivated to establish relationships with them, reduce employees' trust in them and weaken employees' psychological attachment to the organization (Fan *et al.*, 2014), thus increasing the turnover intention of employees. On the other hand, guanxi HRM practices make employees feel treated differently in the organization, and this perceived unfair treatment can cause most employees to experience negative feelings about their jobs. In particular, the turnover intention of millennial employees who pursue equality, are self-centered, and have low resilience to frustrations and stress is also more likely to be triggered when they are confronted with guanxi HRM practices due to their relatively low acceptance of unjust treatment in organizations (Wang & Yang, 2017).

In addition, employees tend to spontaneously form different groups in organizations based on their different degrees of perceived guanxi HRM practices (Yu & Fu, 2016).

Millennial employees who are relatively distant from their managers may feel that they deserve better job rewards and thus experience dissatisfaction with their managers and organizations, and turnover intention is precisely the retreating psychological choice that employees make after experiencing dissatisfaction (Porter & Steers, 1973). Therefore, guanxi HRM practices in organizations can stimulate the generation and formation of the turnover intention of employees. Based on this, this study puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Guanxi HRM practices are positively related to the turnover intention of millennials in the banking industry.

2.7.3 Guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification

Many activities and behaviors in an individual's daily life are, in essence, an effort to search for or assert his/her identity (Ma *et al.*, 2011). Karl Marx once said that "the essence of man is the ensemble of the social relations", which means that man cannot exist in isolation and must be connected to others and to the society. People understand and self-evaluate their identities by recognizing their connections to social organizations. In other words, individuals' recognition of social organizations largely determines their construct of social identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This recognition of the connection between individuals and social organizations is organizational identification. Organizational identification, as a particular form of social identification, exists at both the cognitive level and the affective level as an important way for individuals to acquire a concept of themselves in workplaces. At the cognitive level, organizational identification refers to the cognitive process by which individuals have a sense of membership and belonging to an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). At the affective level, organizational identification is a certain self-definition that individuals maintain affectively out of the attraction of and expectations for their organizations (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1986). Based on social identification theory, organizational identification can be defined as a type of self-concept of individuals. It arises from individuals' perception of their organizational membership and includes individuals' attachment to this organizational membership that results in a sense of emotional belonging

to the organization and a sense of consistency in values (Tajfel, 1982). Organizational identification embodies a fundamental connection between one's self and one's organization. In other words, it emphasizes the integration of an individual's identity with organizational characteristics in self-definition and a unity of the individual's "self-concept" with the "self-concept" in the organization, so as to realize the shift from "I" to "we" (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). The formation of organizational identification helps individuals answer the question of "who am I?", reflecting their dependence on and sense of belonging to the organizations they work for (Li & Chen, 2015).

In the corporate context specifically, organizational identification manifests itself as employees' emotional attachment to organizations in terms of their sense of belonging, pride and loyalty, and it is the result of employees' perceptions and internalization of organizational values (Ma, Jiao, Chen, & Jiang, 2011). Organizational identification, as a strong link between employees and organizations beyond contractual relationships, has become a key element of organizational development and success (Shen & Liu, 2016). In light of this, exploring ways to promote the formation of high levels of organizational identification among employees has been a topic of debate and analysis in the academia. A large number of studies have attempted to identify effective factors that can positively influence the organizational identification of employees from four perspectives, namely, individual characteristics, leadership characteristics, organizational characteristics and environmental characteristics.

Seen from the perspective of HRM practices in organizations, Hatch and Schultz (2002) point out that the symbolic process of information transmission explains how employees' cognitive and psychological changes are affected by the one-way process of information transmission. Organizations can convey to employees the message that they are valued and respected by organizations through HR practices, and this message helps employees form a positive understanding of their organizations, enhance their sense of organizational self-esteem, and enable them to fully recognize their internal membership, thus motivating them to define themselves with organizational identity, which is, in other words, a higher sense of organizational identification. Sun *et al.* (2007) point out that through high-performance

HRM practices, an organization can provide its employees with supportive institutional environments such as employment security, skills training, promising career paths, internal promotions and result-oriented performance appraisals. By doing so, the organization can convey to employees the message that it wishes to establish long-term cooperative relationships with them, which can effectively stimulate their organizational identification; Chen *et al.* (2018) put forward that supportive HRM practices can provide employees with such emotional support as caring, listening, respect and a sense of being needed as well as such instrumental support as information, resources, equipment and training. And employees who receive organizational support will form a sense of identification with the organization according to the degree of support. Fuller *et al.* (2006) also point out that, according to the social identity theory, improving the self-esteem of organizational members is the key driving mechanism for forming organizational identification.

When an organization treats employees justly and respectfully and actively conveys to employees the message that they are valued, the self-esteem of employees will be stimulated, which helps raise the level of their organizational identification. Most of the existing studies focus on the specific effect mechanisms of such positive HRM practices as high-performance and supportive HRM practices on employees' organization identification, while few studies have explored the possible association between guanxi HRM practices and employees' organization identification.

In fact, guanxi HRM practices are highly compatible with China's organizational management situations. It is also a core concept for understanding the structure of Chinese organizations as well as the psychology and behavior of the Chinese people. This study infers that guanxi HRM practices in an organization may have an important impact on the formation process of employees' organizational identification, manifested in the following two aspects: First, when the management decision-making and resource allocation in an organization can follow the established rules and regulations to objectively and truly reflect employees' work results and contributions to the organization, employees will perceive that the organization can perform the expected distribution results according to the rules. And this perception is conducive to enhancing the image and prestige of the organization in the

minds of employees, thereby raising the level of employees' organizational identification (Han, 2016). Conversely, when employees perceive guanxi HRM practices in their organization, they will think that the organization fails to effectively fulfill the agreed requirements in accordance with the articles of association and regulations. And this perception will result in the breach of employees' psychological contract and undermine the formation of their organizational identification.

Second, guanxi HRM practices mean that organizations are affected by personal relationships in all aspects, including hiring, job assignment, compensation, promotion and performance appraisal. If employees realize that there is an "inside story" of guanxi in the organization's management process, their trust in the organization will be significantly undermined. As a consequence, their psychological attachment to the organization will be weakened to the extent that they will no longer incorporate the organization's values into their definition of self-concept, which means their degree of identification with the organization will reduce.

Third, the perception of guanxi HRM practices in an organization will cause employees to judge the organization's justice. And the judgment result of whether the organization is just will convey the organization's care for and importance attached to employees through the meaning construction process (Zhang, Liu, & Ding, 2018). The perception of a high level of guanxi HRM practices will lead to a reduction in employees' sense of organizational justice, which will significantly weaken employees' sense of organizational support (Han, 2016). The decline in the sense of organizational support will cause employees to think that it is difficult for the organization to provide them with the necessary social resources and work support to advance their career development. As a result, employees will have an estranged emotional distance to the organization, find it hard to form a sense of belonging to the organization, and become less perceptive of their organization membership, ultimately leading to their reduced levels of organizational identification. Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following hypothesis:

H2: Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to the organizational identification of millennial employees in the banking industry.

2.7.4 The mediating effect of organizational identification

Numerous studies have shown that organizational identification has a significant impact on individuals' attitude formation and behavioral performance. As an important antecedent to predicting employees' active turnover behavior, turnover intention describes the likelihood that an individual will quit his/her current job at some point in the future and is the final psychological stage for an employee to make the decision to stay in or leave the current organization (McCarthy, Tyrrell, & Lehane, 2007). It is evident that turnover intention is a manifestation of an individual's tendency to psychologically deviate from his or her connection with the organization, while organizational identification is, in a sense, a cognitive variable that characterizes the degree of psychological connection between an individual and the organization. In this sense, the two are inextricably linked. In recent years, a large number of studies have examined the factors that influence the turnover intention of employees from different perspectives, citing organizational identification as a mediator to elaborate on and explain the specific effect mechanism. For example, Wu *et al.* (2018) examined the mediating effect of organizational identification on the process of the turnover intention of employees from the three dimensions of paternalistic leadership. And they found through empirical research that moral leaders set a good example for employees with their noble personal integrity and moral qualities, which tend to stimulate employees' work enthusiasm and sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization, prompting employees to form strong organizational identification, and thereby reducing their turnover intention. Authoritative leaders also positively influence employees' organizational identification and thus their turnover intention. Han (2016) established the association between organizational justice and organizational identification as well as that between organizational identification and turnover intention. He also validated the mediating effect of organizational identification on how distributive justice, procedural justice and interactive justice influence the turnover intention of millennial employees. De Moura, Abrams, Retter, Gunnarsdottir, and Ando (2009) found that organizational identification can mediate the negative effect of job satisfaction on the turnover intention of employees. And from the direct effect of both on turnover intention, the negative predictive effect of organizational identification is stronger

than that of job satisfaction. Turkoglu and Dalgic (2019) conducted an empirical survey of hotel employees and validated the mediating effect of organizational identification on the process of how job exclusion affects the turnover intention of employees.

The association between employees' organizational identification and turnover intention has been validated by empirical studies, and a large number of scholars have elaborated on and explained the association between the two based on different theories. From the perspective of social identity theory, individuals are socially categorized by specific criteria and acquire a group identity in order to achieve self-fulfillment. In this process, they develop self-concepts, acquire a sense of belonging, and increase their self-esteem. And when there is a gap between the benefits individuals gain in the group and their own expectations, they will adopt strategies such as disengaging from the group in an attempt to change the status quo. Organization is one of the many dimensions of social categorization, and in a sense, organizational identification can be seen as a form of social identification (Tajfel, 1978). Thus, when an organization fails to meet individuals' demands, making it difficult for them to form organizational identification, individuals may generate the idea of leaving the organization, or in other words, they may form turnover intention. In terms of social exchange theory, individuals tend to exchange resources with others, and most of such exchanges are based on weighing of interests (Homans, 1961). According to the principle of reciprocity, when employees gain a sense of belonging from the organization, perceive their membership within the organization, and gain the support and trust of the organization, they are more inclined to stay in the organization, actively contribute to its development, and form exchange relationships with the organization. In contrast, when individuals have difficulty gaining emotional affirmation and recognition within the organization, they will find it difficult to identify with the organization, hence their increased turnover intention.

Based on this, this study infers that employees' perception of guanxi HRM practices in organizations implies that employees are aware that HRM in organizations is influenced by affinity with managers, that management decisions are not strictly implemented in accordance with the articles of association and regulations, and that it is difficult to fully reflect their work contributions through resource allocation. This perception will lead to the

breach of employees' psychological contract, reduce employees' trust in and psychological attachment to the organization, and increase their emotional distance to the organization. As a consequence, employees' organizational identification will significantly decrease, which tends to trigger their idea of leaving the organization. In other words, guanxi HRM practices lead to a high level of turnover intention by reducing employees' organizational identification. Based on this, this study puts forward the following hypothesis.

H3: Organizational identification mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.

2.7.5 Guanxi HRM practices and LMX

LMX theory holds that the relationships between leaders and employees are bidirectional and that these relationships may influence specific leadership behaviors and are also critical for employees' development (Ren & Wang, 2005). LMX is a relationship-based social exchange where leader-subordinate exchange relationships differ due to the scarcity of resources. Specifically, there are a minority of high-quality exchange relationships and a majority of low-quality exchange relationships in organizations (Fu *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, under high intensity work pressure, it is difficult for leaders to establish exactly the same relationship with each subordinate due to time, energy and resource constraints. Instead, they will judge whether and how to establish a relationship with a subordinate based on the subordinate's acceptance of his/her role definition they describe for him/her, and the degree to which that subordinate's performance meets their expectations (Cao & Li, 2016). Leaders tend to select some employees in the work group as their "trusted assistants" and establish high-quality exchange relationships with them, while regarding other employees as their "hired hands" and establishing relatively low-quality exchange relationships with them. According to role-playing theory, the differences in LMX quality come from the differences in the interactions with leaders perceived by employees in three stages, namely, role acquisition, role playing and role accustomization. When the relationships between employees and leaders are close, leaders tend to see employees as "insiders", and will accordingly give them preferential treatments such as giving them more information and

resources to support their work, granting them more job autonomy and authority, and providing them with better job guidance and promotion opportunities. As to "outsiders", leaders provide them with relevant support only to the extent specified in the employment contracts (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

LMX embodies the relationships established between leaders and employees in the course of their work and reflects the degree of resource exchange and support between leaders and their subordinates (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). As the resource allocators in organizations, leaders allocate different information, tasks, feedback, support and attention. Compared to employees with low-quality LMX, employees with high-quality LMX enjoy preferential resources and higher levels of trust, respect and even privilege. As a result, they tend to exhibit higher levels of responsibility and reciprocity towards their organizations and leaders, which in turn triggers a range of behavioral performance that benefits the organization and their personal development (Bowler, Paul, & Halbesleben, 2019). Therefore, a large number of relevant studies are devoted to exploring the antecedents of LMX with a view to identifying organizational, leadership and individual factors that can effectively improve the quality of employees' LMX.

Although the influencing factors of LMX have received a lot of attention and research, scholars still know little about the association between HRM practices and LMX. Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski, and Chaudhry (2009) pointed out that HRM practices are one of the important factors influencing the differences in employees' LMX within work teams. As one of the small number of studies focusing on the relationship between HRM practices and LMX, Li and Frenkel's empirical study (2017) validated that HRM practices perceived by leaders will positively affect employees' perception of LMX. Miao *et al.* (2013) suggested that high-performance work practices manifested as emphasis on training, career guidance, performance appraisal and encouraging employee involvement may cause employees to feel more support and rewards from organizations and leaders, thus motivating employees to improve their evaluation of the LMX quality. Further, they validated the significantly positive predictive effect of high-performance work systems on employees' LMX through empirical research. However, there are still very few studies on guanxi HRM practices with

strong Chinese characteristics to establish its association with LMX.

Influenced by the "guanxi" culture, in the context of Chinese organizations, managers tend to take their affinity with their subordinates into consideration when making HRM decisions, and a higher level of guanxi HRM practices means that HR decisions in the organization are more influenced by superior-subordinate relationships. Individual employees may benefit from guanxi practices where superiors allocate resources and rewards based on affinity with subordinates. However, for most employees, guanxi practices that entail resource allocation based on affinity create a perception of organizational injustice. According to social exchange theory, there are two types of exchange relationships in an organizational context, namely, social exchange between employees and organizations and social exchange between employees and leaders. China is a guanxi-oriented society, and interpersonal interactions have a significant impact on employees' attitude perception, emotional perception and behavioral performance (Yuan & He, 2010). As the representatives of an organization, leaders represent the image of the organization and are also the main issuers of the organization's information and direct performers of the organization's decisions and responsibilities. Therefore, employees' relationships with the organization may be more or even directly reflected in their relationships with leaders (Cao & Li, 2016). When employees perceive a sense of unjust treatment in the organization, they may transfer this negative perception and evaluation of the organization to leaders, which is detrimental for them to establish quality LMX relationships with leaders. Furthermore, according to social comparison theory, individuals tend to compare themselves to other employees in the organization when assessing their own situation, by measuring relative compensation differences in the organization. Employees who are distant from their leaders will compare their work rewards to the relatively generous awards and rewards gained by their colleagues through guanxi. And this difference shown in comparison can lead to a perception that they are stuck in instrumental exchanges with the organization, which in turn reduces their level of LMX. Therefore, this study infers that guanxi HRM practices are not conducive for employees to establish good LMX relationships with leaders. Based on this, this study puts forward the following hypothesis:

H4: Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to LMX of millennial employees in the banking industry.

2.7.6 The mediating role of LMX

Given that leaders, as the resource allocators and decision implementers in an organization, control the allocation process and proportion of work tasks and resources, and hold key work information in the organization, the exchange relationships with leaders are one of the important factors that employees need to consider when making work decisions or performing work behaviors (Cao & Li, 2016). Leaders will establish different exchange relationships with different subordinates, and subordinates will respond to leaders in very different ways according to the principle of reciprocity. Close relationships with leaders and the benefits they bring usually motivate employees who are "insiders" to have greater trust in, respect for, loyalty to and a stronger sense of reciprocal obligation towards leaders, while employees who are "outsiders" do not see themselves as having responsibilities and obligations to give back to leaders (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). As a result, employees who have high-quality LMX relationships with leaders may more positively exhibit work attitudes and behavioral performance that are beneficial to organizational development, such as higher levels of organizational commitment, higher levels of organizational citizenship, greater work involvement and incorporation of more creativity in their work.   Conversely, employees who have low-quality LMX relationships with leaders may respond through negative behaviors and approaches, such as lower job performance, lower organizational loyalty, lack of the sense of responsibility and active search for job-hopping opportunities (Henderson *et al.*, 2009).

The relationship between LMX and turnover intention has been discussed in literature. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) pointed out that quite a few theories and practice have confirmed that LMX can effectively predict job satisfaction and turnover intention. Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard, and Bhargave (2012) argued that LMX can effectively reduce the turnover intention of employees by increasing their degrees of job involvement. Xiao and Zhao (2017) examined the mediating effect of LMX when exploring the mechanism by which ethical

leadership influences the turnover intention of employees. And they validated the negative correlation between LMX and the turnover intention of employees. Overall, most of the previous studies have concluded that LMX may have a significant impact on the turnover intention of employees in two ways. On the one hand, low-quality LMX leads to work problems such as lack of guidance from leaders to employees, less rewarding behaviors from leaders to employees and emotional problems such as lack of trust between leaders and employees and less emotional support from leaders to employees; On the other hand, low-quality LMX makes employees more aware of the contrast in benefits when comparing likelihood of promotions, training opportunities and honors received with those colleagues who benefit from high-quality LMX relationships, which will stimulate employees to develop corresponding behaviors (Gerstner, 1997).

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) summarized the eight major factors that contribute to the turnover intention of employees and suggested that affective, calculative and alternative factors may be the dominant factors that contribute to employees' turnover decision. Among them, affective factors are employees' most direct emotional response to the organization. And if the emotional response is negative, employees will develop a high level of turnover intention; calculative factors are employees' measurement of the expected benefits or desired goals to be achieved in the future by remaining in the organization. And if the measurement result is negative, employees will be more inclined to leave the organization. This study holds that, on the one hand, employees with low-quality LMX, when perceiving a gap in benefit comparison between them and the employees who benefit from high-quality LMX, may experience negative emotions towards leaders. Just as employees' negative evaluation of the organization will be transferred to leaders, leaders, as policy implementers and messengers within an organization, are an important basis for employees to form an intuitive impression of the organization. As a result, employees may pass on their negative emotional responses towards their leaders to the organization, which serves as a carrier. According to Maertz and Griffeth (2004), such negative emotional response to the organization motivates employees to have a higher level of turnover intention. On the other hand, employees who hold low-quality LMX have low levels of trust in their leaders and are prone to experience

the sense of job insecurity. They may judge on the basis of the current situation that their future prospects can hardly meet their expectations. Therefore, they may be more inclined to leave the organization for better development. In other words, they tend to form relatively high levels of turnover intention. In contrast, employees with high-quality LMX are more likely to have a positive emotional response to leaders and are confident about their career prospects in the organization, hence their relatively low levels of turnover intention.

Based on this, this study proposes that guanxi HRM practices will cause employees to develop perceptions of organizational injustice, that such negative perceptions will transfer to leaders and are not conducive for employees to establish good LMX relationships with leaders. Besides, guanxi practices will cause employees to develop a bigger psychological gap when making comparisons of relative compensation differences, which leads employees to form lower evaluations of LMX. And low-quality LMX relationships can lead to negative emotional responses from employees on the one hand, and undermine employees' expectations for a good future in the organization on the other hand, thus triggering employees' turnover intention. In other words, guanxi HRM practices lead to an increase in the turnover intention of employees by reducing their levels of LMX.

H5: LMX mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.

2.7.7 The moderating role of traditionality

Traditionality, as an important reflection of traditional Chinese values, tends to be manifested in the role relationships and obligations of "the distinction of leaders as superiors and members as inferiors" generally emphasized in traditional societies as well as the unconditional obedience and compliance of subordinates to orders from their superiors in the specific context of the superior-subordinate relationships in an organization (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Traditionality can explain to some extent the differences in attitude formation and behavioral performance of employees in equivalent contexts. Individuals with high levels of traditionality tend to conform to the role obligations emphasized by traditional societies, making it their responsibility and obligation to meet the expectations of their superiors, while

individuals with low levels of traditionality tend to view themselves as being in equal relationships with their superiors and tend to follow the principle of incentive-contribution balance in their work and interpersonal interactions (Farh *et al.*, 2007).

Given that traditionality is an important value factor that governs the behavior of contemporary Chinese, a large number of scholars have introduced it into the field of organizational management research and studied its important moderating role in the process where different factors affect employees' work outcomes. For example, in the early days, Farh *et al.* (1997) studied the moderating role traditionality plays in the association between employees' perceptions of organizational justice and their organizational citizenship behavior in the context of Chinese organizations. Later on, they further validated the moderating role of traditionality in the process by which perceptions of organizational support influences employees' performance outcomes. They found that for individuals with low levels of traditionality, perceptions of organizational support have a more significant effect on employees' performance outcomes (Farh *et al.*, 2007). Chen and Aryee (2007) found that traditionality negatively moderates the effect of perceptions of authorization on organizational-based self-esteem and perceptions of the insider identity. Specifically, the moderating effect is manifested in the fact that for employees with low levels of traditionality, perceptions of authorization have a greater positive effect on both their organizational-based self-esteem and perceptions of the insider identity. Wu *et al.* (2019) validated in their empirical study the moderating effect of traditionality on mentorship relationship and employees' organization-based self-esteem relationship. The result also indicated that the lower levels of traditionality of employees, the stronger positive effect of mentorship quality on organization-based self-esteem. In recent years, some empirical studies in China have also explored the moderating role of traditionality. For example, Wang *et al.* (2012) studied the moderating role of traditionality in the process by which organizational injustice affects employees' deviant behavior; Yu *et al.* (2015) found that traditionality significantly weakens the negative correlation between abusive management and job performance.

Existing research has found that employees with different levels of traditionality develop different work perceptions and attitudes and exhibit different work behaviors when

confronted with the same organizational management situations. Therefore, employees with different levels of traditionality values may respond differently when placed in the context of guanxi HRM practices. In fact, guanxi HRM practices are not the philosophy of enterprise HRM but the fragmented expression of guanxi orientation in modern enterprise management. When confronted with the management phenomenon of guanxi practices, employees make differential judgments at the cognitive level due to the degree of influence of traditional culture (Fan *et al.*, 2014), which may result in different levels of organizational identification and LMX.

Specifically, on the one hand, employees with stronger traditionality ideas may be more tolerant of guanxi HRM practices in the organization. Even if guanxi practices occur in the organization, employees with high levels of traditionality may tend to adhere to the norms and obligations of their roles as "inferiors" according to "the distinction of leaders as superiors and members as inferiors", follow and maintain the management decisions of their supervisors to a greater extent, and avoid negative work attitudes and transgressions as much as possible (Wu *et al.*, 2009). In contrast, employees with low levels of traditionality have weak hierarchical awareness. They are less tolerant of guanxi HRM practices and tend to regard such practices as a disrespect of them from the organization and managers. Therefore, compared to the employees with low levels of traditionality, the employees with high levels of traditionality uphold obedience to and respect for authority, will prioritize organizational interests, and psychologically recognize the organization's rules, regulations and the way it treats them to a greater extent. Under the influence of such values and ways of thinking, the degree of negative influence of guanxi HRM practices on their organizational identification and LMX will be significantly reduced. On the other hand, since employees with low levels of traditionality follow the principle of incentive-contribution balance, their attitudes towards the organization and leaders depend on their perceived support and resource allocation from the organization and leaders. In other words, employees with low levels of traditionality tend to adopt the exchange rule that "I will treat the organization the way I am treated by the organization". In comparison, for employees with high levels of traditionality, their behavioral norms are shaken to a lesser extent by organizational differentiation and

always form their perceptions and feelings about the organization and leaders based on their perceived specific role obligations (Hui *et al.*, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2012). Thus, in the face of guanxi HRM practices, employees with low levels of traditionality are more likely to reduce their commitment to the organization and leaders by reducing their organizational identification and perceptions of LMX, thereby achieving a state of negative reciprocal equilibrium. In other words, the lower levels of employee traditionality, the stronger negative correlation between guanxi HRM practices and employees' organizational identification and LMX, which further influences their turnover intention to a larger extent. Based on the above analysis, this study puts forward the following hypothesis.

H6a: Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on organizational identification for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality.

H6b: Organizational identification mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.

H7a: Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and LMX of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on LMX for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality.

H7b: LMX mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.

In conclusion, the theoretical model of this study is shown in Figure 2-1.
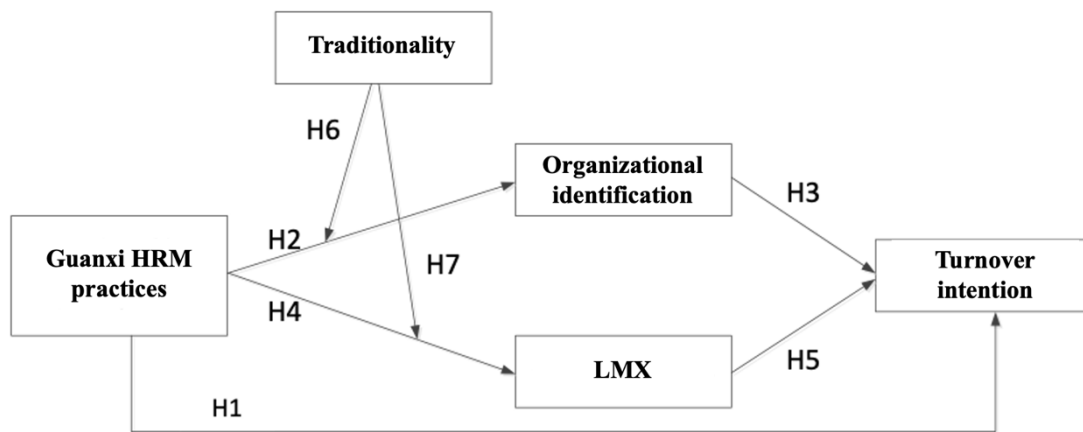
Figure 2-1 Theoretical model of this study

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Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter describes the research design of this study. First, an introduction to the participants is given, and the process and methods of data collection described; second, the tools employed in this study to measure guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and the control variables designed for this study are described. In addition, the process and results of the small-scale pilot survey conducted in this study are described and analyzed using statistical analysis software such as SPSS and AMOS. Then, on this basis, the sample data are used for validity analysis, reliability analysis, discriminant validity test and common method bias test.

3.1 Participants

The participants are the millennial employees in the banking industry in Ningbo, China. In order to ensure the collection of accurate data from these millennial employees for statistical analysis and testing, age-related items were designed in the questionnaire and participants were asked to fill in their specific age. Since this study defines millennial employees as the group of employees born after 1980, in the subsequent data analysis, the data of participants who did not fit in the age category of millennial employees, or in other words, those over 40 years old, were excluded in order to ensure the rigor and objectivity of the study. In the questionnaire, employees evaluated their perceptions of guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, turnover intention and traditionality. All participants completed and submitted the questionnaire anonymously to ensure that the survey data are authentic and scientific.

3.2 Data collection

The survey was carried out between September and December 2019. "Questionnaire

Star", a widely used online questionnaire platform in China, was used to design the electronic questionnaire and generate the questionnaire link, which was sent to relevant employees in the banking industry for completion. In this study, two surveys were conducted. Firstly, in order to test the reliability of the measurement scales of such variables as perceptions of guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, turnover intention and traditionality, and to test the overall design of the questionnaire, a pilot survey was conducted in September 2019. Relying on the researcher's connections in the banking industry, 157 electronic questionnaires were distributed, all of which were recovered. After analyzing and processing the pilot survey data, the questionnaire design was modified and improved to form the final questionnaire. The second survey was conducted between November and December 2019, with a total of 579 questionnaires distributed. Since the electronic questionnaire was designed in the way that each question must be answered, and the participants were screened as to whether or not they were working in a bank, all the questionnaires recovered were completed by the employees in the banking industry. On this basis, the questionnaires completed by non-millennial employees, and the questionnaires that were obviously not answered seriously were screened out and deleted. Finally, 467 valid questionnaires were recovered, with an effective recovery rate of 80.66%.

3.3 Measurement

3.3.1 Guanxi HRM practices

The unidimensional scale developed by Chen *et al.* (2004) was adopted to measure guanxi HRM practices, in which the millennial employees evaluated the guanxi HRM practices within the organization perceived by them. The scale consists of five items. For example, "In our bank, many people are promoted through guanxi"; and "In our bank, supervisors usually decide how to assign tasks based on their guanxi with their subordinates".

Considering the tendency of compromise in Chinese tradition, in order to avoid the situation where participants choose medians too much to render the measurement of variables distorted, this study adopts the six-point Likert scoring method for the scale with

reference to the practice of predecessors. Specifically, the participants choose the answers that best match their real experience regarding some descriptions of the bank they are currently working in, from "1= strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree". The higher the score on the scale, the stronger the employee's perception of guanxi HRM practices. or in other words, the higher the employee's perception that guanxi HRM practices exist in the organization.

3.3.2 Turnover intention

The turnover intention of millennial employees was measured with the unidimensional scale developed by Rosin and Korabik (1991), where the millennial employees evaluated their turnover intention. The scale consists of four items. For example, "I have thought about leaving my current organization", and "I am currently looking for other job opportunities."

Similarly, this study adopts the six-point Likert scoring method for the scale, according to which participants chose the answers that best match their true feelings regarding some descriptions of their current work status, from "1= strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree",. The higher the score on the scale, the higher the employee's turnover intention.

3.3.3 Organizational identification

Organizational identification was measured using the unidimensional measurement scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), where the millennial employees evaluated their organizational identification. The scale consists of six items. For example, "When someone criticizes the bank I am working for, I also feel insulted personally", and "when the outside world (media) criticizes our bank, I feel very embarrassed."

Similarly, this study adopts the six-point Likert scoring method for the scale, according to which participants chose the answers that best match their real situation regarding some descriptions of their feelings towards the bank they are currently working in, from "1= strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree". The higher the score on the scale, the higher the employee's level of organizational identification.

3.3.4 Leader-member exchange

LMX was measured using the unidimensional measurement scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984), where millennial employees evaluated their LMX. The scale consists of seven items. For example, "In general, I am very clear whether my supervisor is satisfied with my job performance", and "No matter how much authority my supervisor has, he/she would use his/her power to help me solve my work problems."

Similarly, this study adopts the six-point Likert scoring method for the scale, according to which participants chose the answers that best match their real situation regarding the specific content of the item describing their feelings towards their immediate supervisors, from "1= strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree". The higher the score on the scale, the higher level the employee's perception of LMX, or in other words, the higher level of LMX the employee think he/she has with the leader.

3.3.5 Traditionality

Traditionality was measured using the unidimensional measurement scale developed by Farh (1997), where the millennial employees evaluated their levels of traditionality. The scale consists of five items. For example, "The best way to avoid mistakes is to follow the elders' instructions", and "when a dispute arises, the most senior person should be asked to uphold justice."

Similarly, this study adopts the six-point Likert scoring method for the scale, according to which participants chose the answers that best match their real situation regarding the specific content of the item describing their views of Chinese traditional ideas, from "1= strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree". The higher the score on the scale, the higher level of the employee's traditionality.

3.3.6 Control variables

With reference to previous studies, some demographic and other variables were included in the questionnaire as control variables, including the place of residence before university, only child or not, gender, marital status, age, organizational tenure, operating post,

nature of work unit, team size, number of children, education, domicile place and after-tax annual income. In order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results, the possible effects of each control variable were fully considered in the data analysis. For the control variables, with the exception of age and team size, which required specific numbers, the answers to the other items were substituted with the numbers one to six for the respective categories. For example, regarding gender, one represents male and two represents female, and the rest are in the same fashion. Specific descriptions of the control variables are given below.

The place of residence before university is either a city or countryside. Domicile place is either local or nonlocal. Gender is divided into male and female. Marital status is either married or unmarried. Age is designed for a specific number. Besides, participants need to fill in whether they are the only children, and if not, the number of children in their families (divided into four categories, no child yet, one child, two children, and more than three children). Education is divided into four categories, respectively, high school or below, junior college, college, master or above. After-tax annual income is divided into four categories, namely, below 80,000 yuan, 80,000-150,000 yuan, 150,000-250,000 yuan, as well as 250,000 yuan and above.

Organizational tenure in the bank is subdivided into five categories, namely, less than one year, one-three years, three-five years, five-ten years, and more than ten years. The specific category of the unit in the bank is either a branch or the management headquarter. Based on the general organizational structure and job descriptions of Bank of China enterprises, positions are classified into six categories, namely, operation support, marketing, business management, risk control, comprehensive management and information technology. Besides, participants also need to fill in the number of teams directly managed by the supervisor.

3.4 Pilot test

3.4.1 Design of the pilot survey questionnaire

In terms of the questionnaire design, it is important to keep the opening prompts as simple as possible to describe the purpose of the survey, explicitly put forward the basic requirements for completing each question in its entirety, make a solemn promise to the participants (including confidentiality of data, for academic research only) and express gratitude to the participants. The prompts often give the participants important information about the questionnaire and need to be expressed concisely and clearly. In addition, the questionnaire used in this study involves multiple variables, which need to be ranked in order of importance in the questionnaire.

For the five variables, namely, guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, traditionality and turnover intention, this study uses scales that have been validated in the Chinese context. And to ensure this study is scientific, a standard translation procedure, back translation, is used. First, the English questionnaire was translated into Chinese. Then two experts and two doctoral students from relevant fields were invited to proofread and revise the questionnaire to form the initial Chinese questionnaire. After that, two postgraduates of English majors were invited to translate the Chinese questionnaire back into English, carefully compare the differences between the translated English and the original English, and revise the Chinese translation questionnaire with obvious differences. The test questionnaire was formed after repeated deliberations and rounds of the same process. To enable the participants to better understand the meaning of each questionnaire item, four millennial employees in the banking industry were first invited to discuss the statements of the questionnaire items. Without changing the meaning of the original items, they were asked to try to choose an easy-to-understand statement. Finally, the questionnaire was formed to fit the original scale and conform to the Chinese language habits.

3.4.2 Survey and analysis of the pilot survey results

In order to test the validity and accuracy of each measurement scale, a pilot survey was

carried out on a small scale. Specifically, 157 millennial employees in the banking industry were selected and given the questionnaire. In total, 157 questionnaires were distributed, all of which were recovered, with an effective recovery rate of 100%. Then a screening was carried out regarding the 157 recovered questionnaires to eliminate the questionnaires with wrong answers, inconsistency and obviously unserious answers. Finally, 150 valid questionnaires were retained, with an effective recovery rate of 93.75%. Then the data of the 150 valid questionnaires were imported in SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis and factor analysis.

The average age of the 150 participants is 33.57 years old, with a standard deviation of 2.72. Among them, 39 (26.00%) are male and 111 (74.00%) are female. As to marital status, the majority of the participants, as many as 143 (95.33%), are married. Over half of the participants, as many as 88 (58.67%), had worked in the bank for five-ten years, and 36 (24.00%) had worked there for three-five years. The participants were in different positions, with a majority, as many as 63 (42.00%), taking business management positions and four (2.67%) taking information technology positions. In terms of education, the participants are generally well educated. None of them fall into the category of high school education or below. Most of them, as many as 108 (72.00%), are college graduates.

A factor analysis of the measurement scales of the 150 participants is conducted, reaching the following results:

(1) Guanxi HRM practices

The KMO and Bartlett's spherical test was performed on the five items of the Guanxi HRM Practice Scale. The result showed a KMO value of 0.87, higher than the empirical standard value of 0.7. The χ^2 value of Bartlett's spherical test was 495.902, which reached the level of significance ($p<0.001$), indicating the existence of common factors among the data correlation matrices. In summary, the statistics of the scale can be considered suitable for factor analysis.

It was found through principal component analysis (PCA) that a factor was extracted, which explained the variance variation of 73.97%, and the load values of each item reached high levels (0.885, 0.870, 0.863, 0.852, 0.830), indicating that the scale was well-structured,

and no adjustment of the measured items was required.

(2) Turnover intention

The KMO and Bartlett's spherical test was performed on the four items of the turnover intention scale. The result showed a KMO value of 0.85, higher than the empirical standard value of 0.7, indicating the presence of quite a few common factors. The χ^2 value of Bartlett's spherical test was 466.107, which reached the level of significance (p<0.001), indicating the existence of common factors among the data correlation matrices. In summary, the statistics of the scale can be considered suitable for factor analysis.

It was found through PCA that a factor was extracted, which explained the variance variation of 81.79%, and the load values of each item reached high levels (0.933, 0.916, 0.888, 0.880), indicating that the scale was well-structured, and no adjustment of the measured items was required.

(3) Organizational identification

The KMO and Bartlett's spherical test was performed on the six items of the organizational identification scale. The result showed a KMO value of 0.77, slightly higher than the empirical standard value of 0.7, indicating the presence of quite a few common factors. The χ^2 value of Bartlett's spherical test was 181.759, which reached the level of significance (p<0.001), indicating the existence of common factors among the data correlation matrices. In summary, the statistics of the scale can be considered suitable for factor analysis.

It was found through PCA that a factor was extracted, which only explained the variance variation of 81.79%. But the load values of the six items were respectively 0.660, 0.744, 0.553, 0.6070, 0.700 and 0.731, all of which were significantly higher than the critical value of 0.4. Considering that this scale has been widely used in relevant empirical studies in China and recognized by the majority of scholars, and that most of its applications exhibited sound reliability and validity, this study kept the integrity of this classic scale, deemed its structure acceptable, and did not make any adjustment of its measurement items.

(4) LMX

The KMO and Bartlett's spherical test was performed on the seven items of the LMX scale. The result showed a KMO value of 0.72, higher than the empirical standard value of 0.7, indicating the presence of quite a few common factors. The χ^2 value of Bartlett's spherical test was 308.372, which reached the level of significance (p<0.001), indicating the existence of common factors among the data correlation matrices. In summary, the statistics of the scale can be considered suitable for factor analysis.

It was found through PCA that two factors were extracted, which explained the variance variation of 64.36%. The first factor includes Items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 with a respective load value of 0.786, 0.785, 0.743, 0.730 and 0.602, all of which were significantly higher than the critical value of 0.4, thus explaining the variance of 38.41%. The second factor includes Items 4 and 5. The analysis result was inconsistent with the unidimensional structure put forward by Scandura and Graen (1984). So, Items 4 and 5 were removed. Only Items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 of the LMX measurement scale were kept.

(5) Traditionality

The KMO and Bartlett's spherical test was performed on the five items of the traditionality scale. The result showed a KMO value of 0.78, slightly higher than the empirical standard value of 0.7, indicating the presence of quite a few common factors. The χ^2 value of Bartlett's spherical test was 236.841, which reached the level of significance (p<0.001), indicating the existence of common factors among the data correlation matrices. In summary, the statistics of the scale can be considered suitable for factor analysis.

It was found through PCA that a factor was extracted, which explained the variance variation of 55.26%, and the load values of Items 1, 2, 3 and 4 all reached relatively high levels (0.837, 0.832, 0.821 and 0.665), whereas the load value of Item 5 was 0.505, which was relatively lower. Deleting Item 5 could improve the structure of the scale. Therefore, only the first four items of the traditionality measurement scale were kept.

3.5 Validity analysis

Based on the analysis results of the pilot test, validity analyses of the scales were carried

out using the statistics of 467 valid samples recovered from the formal survey. The results are as follows.

(1) Guanxi HRM practices

A structural equation model was established to examine the statistics. The fitting of the guanxi HRM practices model is shown in Table 3-1, and the structure of the five items of the scale can be considered reasonable. The PCA results of the scale are shown in Table 3-2 (KMO=0.849, Bartlett $\chi^2(15)$ =1214.595, p<.001, the variance of 68.16% explained).

Table 3-1 Fitting analysis results of the structural model of each variable

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
HRMGX	68.471	5	13.694	0.941	0.948	0.895	0.948	0.165
TI	8.059	2	4.029	0.991	0.995	0.986	0.995	0.081
OI	24.529	9	2.725	0.982	0.946	0.941	0.965	0.061
LMX	186.161	14	13.297	0.892	0.752	0.624	0.749	0.162
TRAD	23.029	5	4.606	0.981	0.973	0.945	0.972	0.088

Notes: HRMGX = Guangxi HRM; TI = Turnover Intention; OI = Organizational Identification; LMX = Leader-member exchange; TRAD = Traditionality

Table 3-2 Factor matrix of variables

Variables		Item	Factor
	HRMGX1	Many colleagues join our bank through guanxi.	.826
Guanxi HRM practices	HRMGX2	In our bank, many colleagues are promoted through guanxi.	.833
	HRMGX3	In our bank, supervisors often decide how to distribute rewards based on their guanxi with subordinates.	.826

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Variables		Item	Factor
Guanxi HRM practices	HRMGX4	In our bank, supervisors often decide how to assign tasks based on their guanxi with subordinates.	.845
	HRMGX5	In our bank, performance appraisals tend to be influenced by guanxi.	.796
Turnover intention	TI1	I have thought about leaving the current organization.	.875
	TI2	I plan to leave my current organization in six months.	.868
	TI3	I am currently looking for other job opportunities.	.889
	TI4	I am now thinking about leaving my current organization.	.919
Organization identification	OI1	When someone criticizes the bank I am working in, I also feel insulted personally.	.702
	OI2	I very much want to know how others look at our bank.	.598
	OI3	When talking about our bank, I usually say "we" instead of "they".	.531
	OI4	I regard our bank's success as my own success as well.	.654
	OI5	When someone praises our bank, I also feel praised personally.	.685
	OI6	When the outside world (media) criticizes our bank, I feel very embarrassed.	.709
Leader-Member exchange	LMX1	In general, I am very clear whether my supervisor is satisfied with my job performance.	.623

Variables		Item	Factor
Leader-Member exchange	LMX2	I think my supervisor knows very well my problems and needs in work.	.724
	LMX3	I think my supervisor knows my potential very well.	.738
	LMX6	I trust my supervisor enough to defend and explain the decisions he/she makes even when he/she is absent.	.663
	LMX7	I have a very good relationship with my supervisor.	.699
Traditionality	TRAD1	The leader of a unit is like the head of a family, and employees should obey his decisions on all unit matters.	.805
	TRAD2	The best way to avoid mistakes is to follow the elders' instructions.	.842
	TRAD3	Before marriage, a woman should obey her father; after marriage, she should listen to her husband.	.706
	TRAD4	When a dispute arises, the most senior person should be asked to uphold justice.	.805

Notes: HRMGX = Guangxi HRM; TI = Turnover Intention; OI = Organizational Identification; LMX = Leader-member exchange; TRAD = Traditionality

(1) Turnover intention

A structural equation model was established to examine the statistics. The fitting of the turnover intention model is shown in Table 3-1, and the structure of the four items of the scale can be considered reasonable. The PCA results of the scale are shown in Table 3-2 (KMO=0.844, Bartlett $\chi^2(15)$ =1260.309, p<.001, the variance of 78.82% explained).

(2) Organizational identification

A structural equation model was established to examine the statistics. The fitting of the organizational identification model is shown in Table 3-1, and the structure of the six items

of the scale can be considered reasonable. The PCA results of the scale are shown in Table 3-2 (KMO=0.789, Bartlett $\chi^2(15)$ =454.184, p<.001, the variance of 42.20% explained).

(3) LMX

A structural equation model was established to examine the statistics. The fitting of LMX model is shown in Table 3-1, and the structure of the seven items of the scale can be considered to have deviated from the actual situation. After the removal of Items 4 and 5, the PCA results of the scale are shown in Table 3-2 (KMO=0.783, Bartlett $\chi^2(15)$ =407.188, p<.001, the variance of 47.720% explained).

(4) Traditionality

A structural equation model was established to examine the statistics. The fitting of the traditionality model is shown in Table 3-1. After removing Item 5, the PCA results of the scale are shown in Table 3-2 (KMO=0.778, Bartlett $\chi^2(15)$ =577.127, p<.001, the variance of 62.61% explained).

3.6 Reliability analysis

The reliability of each scale was tested through the Cronbach's α coefficients of the scale. It can be seen from Table 3-3 that the correlation coefficients of different measurement items are higher than 0.4 for each scale and the deletion of no item can make a significant improvement in the Cronbach's coefficient of the scale. The internal consistency coefficient and the correlation coefficient between the scale and each single item are reported in Table 3-4, which shows that the internal consistency coefficient of each dimension is between 0.723 and 0.910. Based on experience, when the Cronbach's α coefficient is higher than 0.7, the scale can be considered to have sound reliability. Thus, it can be considered that the measurement scales of the five variables, namely, guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, traditionality and turnover intention in this study all have sound reliability.

Table 3-3 Reliability analysis

Variable	Item	Correlation between scale and each item	Cronbach'α (after deletion of the item)	Cronbach' α
Guanxi HRM practices	HRMGX1	.721	.858	
	HRMGX2	.728	.856	
	HRMGX3	.720	.858	0.883
	HRMGX4	.744	.852	
	HRMGX5	.681	.867	
Turnover intention	TI1	.778	.890	
	TI2	.766	.895	
	TI3	.798	.883	0.910
	TI4	.846	.866	
Organization identification	OI1	.511	.669	
	OI2	.409	.699	
	OI3	.348	.715	
	OI4	.460	.684	0.723
	OI5	.496	.675	
	OI6	.519	.665	
Leader-member exchange	LMX1	.420	.702	
	LMX2	.523	.663	
	LMX3	.536	.658	0.725
	LMX6	.455	.690	
	LMX7	.495	.676	

Variable	Item	Correlation between scale and each item	Cronbach'α (after deletion of the item)	Cronbach'α
Traditionality	TRAD1	.625	.742	0.799
	TRAD2	.680	.715	
	TRAD3	.515	.795	0.799
	TRAD4	.631	.739	

Notes: HRMGX = Guangxi HRM; TI = Turnover Intention; OI = Organizational Identification; LMX = Leader-member exchange; TRAD = Traditionality

Table 3-4 Fitting analysis results of the nested model

Model	$\chi2$	df	$\chi2/df$	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Single factor	2469.160	252	9.798	0.604	0.495	0.444	0.492	0.137
Two factors	2037.663	251	8.118	0.655	0.593	0.550	0.591	0.124
Three factors	1220.754	249	4.903	0.782	0.779	0.753	0.777	0.092
Four factors a	1117.555	246	4.543	0.805	0.802	0.776	0.800	0.087
Four factors b	1035.914	246	4.211	0.817	0.820	0.797	0.819	0.083
Four factors c	697.929	246	2.837	0.870	0.897	0.884	0.896	0.063
Five factors	452.307	238	1.900	0.923	0.951	0.943	0.951	0.044

Two factors: HRMGX+TRAD+TI; LMX+OI

Three factors: HRMGX+TRAD; LMX+OI; TI

Four factors a: HRMGX; TRAD+OI; LMX; TI

Four factors b: HRMGX+TRAD; LMX; OI; TI

Four factors c: HRMGX; TRAD; LMX+OI; TI

3.7 Discriminative validity test

A validation factor analysis was conducted through AMOS 21.0 to examine the fit of

the structural factors of the scale to the sampled data. Nested models were constructed for the five variables, namely, guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the fit of each structural equation model was used to test the differentiated validity of each variable. According to the fit indices, the five-factor model was found to be the best fit, indicating that the variables of the hypothetical model of this study have good discriminant validity and the data are suitable for further statistical analysis. The fit indices of the nested model are shown in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5 Fitting analysis results of the nested model

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Single factor	2469.160	252	9.798	0.604	0.495	0.444	0.492	0.137
Two factors	2037.663	251	8.118	0.655	0.593	0.550	0.591	0.124
Three factors	1220.754	249	4.903	0.782	0.779	0.753	0.777	0.092
Four factors a	1117.555	246	4.543	0.805	0.802	0.776	0.800	0.087
Four factors b	1035.914	246	4.211	0.817	0.820	0.797	0.819	0.083
Four factors c	697.929	246	2.837	0.870	0.897	0.884	0.896	0.063
Five factors	452.307	238	1.900	0.923	0.951	0.943	0.951	0.044

Two factors: HRMGX+TRAD+TI; LMX+OI

Three factors: HRMGX+TRAD; LMX+OI; TI

Four factors a: HRMGX; TRAD+OI; LMX; TI

Four factors b: HRMGX+TRAD; LMX; OI; TI

Four factors c: HRMGX; TRAD; LMX+OI; TI

3.8 Common method bias test

The statistical data of this study were provided by the surveyed millennial employees in the banking industry at one point in time, which may cause certain common method bias. To ensure the subsequent statistical analyses to be more scientific and reliable, the data were tested for common method bias by combining the Harman's single-factor test and the potential error variable control method. The results are as follows: (1) All the observation indices of each variable were entered into the factor analysis. It was found that five factors were extracted, and the explanation of the variance variation by the first factor was only

25.21%. Therefore, it is preliminarily believed that the common method bias of the research data is acceptable (2) The common method bias of all measurement indices was added as a latent variable to the hypothetical model to construct a five-factor structural equation model. Then a fitting comparison was made with the original four-factor model of the hypothesis. The fitting index values of the five-factor model were: $\chi2$=418.947, df=215, $\chi2$/df=1.949, RMSEA=0.045, GFI=0.928, IFI=0.954, CFI=0.953, TLI=0.940, indicating relatively good fitting. Compared with the four-factor model, the five-factor model's reduction in freedom by adding the common method bias was Δdf=23 and the chi-square reduction was $\Delta\chi2$=33.36, which was less than the critical value of 41.638 at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the overall common method bias of the survey data is considered to be small enough for subsequent statistical analysis.

On the basis of completing the above analyses, this study made descriptive statistical analysis and linear-regression analysis of the data with SPSS for hypothesis testing of the main effect, mediating effect and moderating effect. The specific operation and hypothesis testing results will be given in the next chapter.

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Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of this study. First, descriptions of the participants' demographic variables are given; second, descriptive statistical analyses of variables are made with the help of statistical analysis software; third, analysis of variance is performed for each control variable; after that, the hierarchical regression analysis method is adopted to test the hypotheses according to standard analytical procedures; and finally, the hypothesis testing results are summarized.

4.1 Demographic variables of the participants

The average age of the 467 participants was 33.10 years old, with a standard deviation of 2.68. The demographic variables of the samples are shown in Table 4-1. Of the 467 participants, 384 (82.23%) lived in cities before university, while only 83 (17.77%) lived in the countryside; 262 (56.10%) were the only children of their families and 205 (43.90%) were non-only children; in terms of male to female ratio, 37.47% (175) were men, far fewer than the percentage of women, which was 62.53% (292). And this is more in line with the current gender structure of the Chinese banking industry, where there are more women than men; in terms of marital status, the majority of participants (as many as 429, accounting for 91.86%) were married; more than half (as many as 273, taking up 58.46%) had worked in the current bank for five to ten years, while the shortest organizational tenure were less than one year and only three (0.64%) fell in that category. The participants were widely distributed in different positions, with as many as 201 (43.04%) in business management positions, which took up the largest percentage, and only 31 (6.64%) in information technology positions, which took up the smallest percentage; 266 (56.96%) of them worked in branches and 201 (43.04%) worked for the management headquarter. Most of the participants (a total of 339, accounting for 72.59%) had only one child for the time being, and the least percentage of participants had three or more children. In terms of education, the majority of participants (as many as 349, taking up 74.73%) were college graduates, and

only 1 (0.21%) had a high school diploma or below. The majority of participants (as many as 388, accounting for 83.08%) were locals. The distribution of after-tax annual income was uneven, with more than half of the participants (as many as 244, accounting for 52.25%) earning 80,000-150,000 yuan and a small percentage (only 46) earning 250,000 yuan or more. In addition, team size averaged 11.94 with a standard deviation of 10.29.

Table 4-1 Demographic variables of the participants

Item		Number of people	Proportion to the total number of people (%)
Place of living before college	City	384	82.23%
	Countryside	83	17.77%
Only child or not	Yes	262	56.10%
	No	205	43.90%
Gender	Male	175	37.47%
	Female	292	62.53%
Marital status	Married	429	91.86%
	Unmarried	38	8.14%
Length of service	Below 1 year	3	0.64%
	1-3 years	28	6.00%
	3-5 years	114	24.41%
	5-10 years	273	58.46%
	Over 10 years	49	10.49%
Operating post	Operational support	45	9.64%
	Marketing	64	13.70%
	Business management	201	43.04%

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Item		Number of people	Proportion to the total number of people (%)
Operating post	Risk control	30	6.42%
	Comprehensive management	96	20.56%
	Information technology	31	6.64%
Nature of work unit	Branch	266	56.96%
	Management headquarter	201	43.04%
Number of children	N/A	58	12.42%
	1	339	72.59%
	2	67	14.35%
	3 or more	3	0.64%
Education	High school or below	1	0.21%
	Junior college	27	5.78%
	College	349	74.73%
	Master or above	90	19.27%
Domicile place	Local	388	83.08%
	Nonlocal	79	16.92%
After-tax annual income	Below 80,000 yuan	56	11.99%
	80,000-150,000 yuan	244	52.25%
	150,000-250,000	121	25.91%
	Over 250,000	46	9.85%

4.2 Correlations of key variables

Descriptive statistical analysis is performed after reliability and validity tests are performed on the sampled data. The mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of each variable are shown in Table 4-2. It can be seen from the table that guanxi HRM practices are significantly and positively correlated with the turnover intention of employees ($r=.459$, $p<0.01$), but significantly and negatively correlated with both employees' organizational identification and their LMX (organizational identification, $r=-.179$, $p<0.01$; LMX, $r=-.295$, $p<0.01$). Organizational identification is significantly and negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r=-.342$, $p<0.01$), and LMX also exhibited a significantly negative correlation with turnover intention ($r=-.365$, $p<0.01$). The results of the descriptive statistical analysis provide initial support for the validation of the theoretical model.

4.3 Analysis of variance

In this study, independent sample t-tests were used to test the differences in guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality in such aspects as the place of living before college, only child or not, gender, marital status, nature of work unit and domicile place. Then one-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in the main variables in such aspects as organizational tenure, position, number of children, education and after-tax annual income.

4.3.1 Place of living before college

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using the place of living before college as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-3. Significant inter-group differences in organizational identification are observed. Specifically, millennial employees in the banking industry who lived in cities before college (mean=4.44, SD=.72) have a higher level of organizational identification with the work unit than those who lived in the countryside (mean=4.13, SD=.69, $p<.001$).

Table 4-2 Results of the descriptive statistical analysis (N=467)

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	1.63	.48	-												
2. Marital status	1.08	.27	-.012	-											
3. Age	33.10	2.68	.000	-.172**	-										
4. Length of service	3.72	.76	-.063	-.170**	.374**	-									
5. Operating post	3.34	1.38	-.153**	.079	.113*	.095*	-								
6. Team size	11.94	10.29	.062	-.005	.045	-.014	-.018	-							
7. Number of children	2.03	.54	.021	-.568**	.196**	.148**	-.018	.036	-						
8. Education	3.13	.49	-.028	.064	.043	.075	.035	.161**	-.040	-					
9. After-	2.34	.81	-.050	-.046	.201**	.271**	.128**	.178**	.102*	.271**	-				

tax annual income

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10. GXHRM	3.27	1.14	-.007	.046	-.072	-.130**	-.010	.070	-.038	.022	-.076	-			
11. TI	2.25	1.18	-.028	.080	-.048	-.123**	-.083	.118*	-.031	-.077	-.110*	.459**	-		
12. OI	4.83	.65	.104*	-.107*	.042	.010	-.047	-.053	.089	.030	-.067	-.179**	-.342**	-	
13. LMX	4.39	.72	-.023	-.042	.118*	.065	.027	-.030	.018	.146**	.146**	-.295**	-.365**	.377**	-
14. TRAD	3.18	1.05	-.179**	-.073	-.001	-.016	.052	.175**	.132**	-.091*	.021	.248**	.193**	-.050	.110*

Note: ** represents $p<0.01$，* represents $p<0.05$. GXHRM=Guangxi HRM; TI=Turnover Intention; OI=Organizational Identification; LMX=Leader Member Exchange; TRAD=Traditionality;

Table 4-3 Independent sample t-test of pre-university living area for each variable

Variable	Place of living before college	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig. (2-tailed)
Organization identification	City	384	4.44	.72	.591	.000
	village	83	4.13	.69		.000

4.3.2 Only child or not

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using "only child or not" as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-4. Significant inter-group differences are observed in organizational identification and traditionality. Specifically, millennial employees in the banking industry who are not the only children (mean=4.91, SD=.64) have a higher level of organizational identification than millennial employees who are the only children (mean=4.77, SD=.65; p<.05). The traditionality level of millennial employees in the banking industry who are the only children (mean=3.28, SD=1.05) is higher than that of millennial employees who are not the only children (mean=3.06, SD=1.05; p<.05).

Table 4-4 Independent sample t-test of only child or not for each variable

Variable	Only child or not	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig.(2-tailed)
Organization identification	yes	262	4.77	.65	.811	.022
	no	205	4.91	.64		.022
Traditionality	yes	262	3.28	1.05	.734	.026
	no	205	3.06	1.05		.026

4.3.3 Gender

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using gender as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and

traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-5. Significant inter-group differences are observed in organizational identification and traditionality. Specifically, female millennial employees in the banking industry (mean=4.89, SD=.58) have a higher level of organizational identification with the work unit than their male counterparts (mean=4.75, SD=.75) (p<.05). And male millennial employees in the banking industry (mean=3.43, SD=1.02) have a higher level of traditionality than female millennial employees (mean=3.04, SD=1.05; p<.001).

Table 4-5 Independent sample t-test of gender for each variable

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig.（2-tailed）
Organization identification	male	175	4.75	.75	.000	.025
	female	292	4.89	.58		.036
Traditionality	male	175	3.43	1.02	.232	.000
	female	292	3.04	1.05		.000

4.3.4 Marital status

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using marital status as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-4. None of the inter-group differences of the five variables reached a significant level.

4.3.5 Nature of work unit

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using nature of work unit as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-6. Significant inter-group differences are observed in guanxi HRM practices. Specifically, millennial employees in the banking industry who were working in a branch (mean=3.36, SD=1.15) have a higher degree of perception towards the guanxi HRM practices in the work unit than millennial employees

who were working in the management headquarter (mean=3.15, SD=1.13; p<.05).

Table 4-6 Independent sample t-test of nature of work unit for each variable

Variable	Nature of work unit	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig.（2-tailed）
Guanxi HRM practices	branches	266	3.36	1.15	.933	.044
	management headquarters	201	3.15	1.13		.044

4.3.6 Domicile place

Independent sample t-tests were conducted using domicile place as a grouping variable on guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX, and traditionality, and the results are shown in Table 4-7. Significant inter-group differences are observed in turnover intention, organizational identification and LMX. Specifically, nonlocal millennial employees in the banking industry (mean=2.62, SD=1.23) have stronger turnover intention than local millennial employees (mean=2.18, SD=1.16; p<.01); local millennial employees in the banking industry (mean=4.87, SD=0.63) have a higher level of organizational identification with the unit than nonlocal millennial employees (mean=4.65, SD=0.71; p<.05); and local millennial employees in the banking industry (mean=4.46, SD=0.70) have a higher level of LMX than nonlocal millennial employees (mean=4.02, SD=0.69; p<.001).

Table 4-7 Independent sample t-test of domicile place for each variable

Variable	Domicile place	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig.（2-tailed）
Turnover intention	local	388	2.18	1.16	.102	.003
	nonlocal	79	2.62	1.23		.004
Organization identification	local	388	4.87	.63	.230	.006
	nonlocal	79	4.65	.71		.012

Variable	Domicile place	N	Mean	S.D.	Levene-test.sig	T-test Sig. (2-tailed）
Leader-Member exchange	local	388	4.46	.70	.915	.000
	nonlocal	79	4.02	.69		.000

4.3.7 Organizational tenure

With organizational tenure as a factor, one-way ANOVA was conducted with guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality as dependent variables, and the results are shown in Table 4-8. Significant inter-group differences are observed in guanxi HRM practices ($p<.01$) and turnover intention ($p<.05$). Yet turnover intention did not pass the homogeneity of variance test. In other words, the variances are uneven. So, it is not suitable for variance test. Therefore, Least Significance Difference (LSD) test of multiple comparisons after ANOVA was carried out for guanxi HRM practices only, and the results are shown in Table 4-9. According to mean comparison results, millennial employees with one-three years of service (mean=3.68, SD=1.02) have significantly higher degrees of perception towards guanxi HRM practices than employees with five-ten years of service (mean=3.15, SD=1.17) and those with over ten years of service (mean=3.144, SD=1.08).

Table 4-8 Variance analysis of organizational tenure

Variable	Length of service group	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Guanxi HRM practices	<1	3	2.60	.53		
	1~3	28	3.68	1.02		
	3~5	114	3.53	1.08	3.551	.007
	5~10	273	3.15	1.17		
	>10	49	3.14	1.08		

Variable	Length of service group	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
	<1	3	1.67	.52		
	1~3	28	2.66	1.24		
Turnover intention	3~5	114	2.48	1.29	2.839	.024
	5~10	273	2.15	1.11		
	>10	49	2.09	1.16		

4.3.8 Operating post

With operating post as a factor, one-way ANOVA was conducted with guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality as dependent variables, and the results are shown in Table 4-10. Significant inter-group differences are observed in turnover intention ($p<.001$) and organizational identification ($p<.01$). Yet organizational identification did not pass the homogeneity of variance test. In other words, the variances are uneven. So, it is not suitable for variance test. Therefore, LSD test of multiple comparisons after ANOVA was carried out for turnover intention only, and the results are shown in Table 4-11. According to mean comparison results, millennial employees holding operation supporting posts (mean=3.63, SD=1.19) have a significantly higher level of turnover intention than employees holding other operating posts, including marketing (mean=3.14, SD=1.09), business management (mean=3.17, SD=1.11), risk control (mean=3.40, SD=1.16), comprehensive management (mean=3.37, SD=1.20) and information technology (mean=3.21, SD=1.16).

Table 4-9 Multiple comparison of organizational tenure variance analysis LSD

Dependent variable	(I) organizational tenure group	(J) organizational tenure group	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance	95% Confidence interval Lower limit	95% Confidence interval Upper limit
Guanxi HRM practices	<1	1~3	-1.08	.69	.12	-2.43	.27
		3~5	-.93	.66	.16	-2.23	.37
		5~10	-.55	.66	.40	-1.84	.74
		>10	-.54	.67	.42	-1.86	.78
	1~3	<1	1.08	.69	.12	-.27	2.43
		3~5	.15	.24	.52	-.32	.62
		5~10	.53	.22	.02	.09	.97
		>10	.54	.27	.05	.01	1.06
	3~5	<1	.93	.66	.16	-.37	2.23
		1~3	-.15	.24	.52	-.62	.32
		5~10	.38	.13	.00	.13	.62

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Dependent variable	(I) organizational tenure group	(J) organizational tenure group	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance□	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
		>10	.38	.19	.05	.00	.76
Guanxi HRM practices	5~10	<1	.55	.66	.40	-.74	1.84
		1~3	-.53	.22	.02	-.97	-.09
		3~5	-.38	.13	.00	-.62	-.13
		>10	.01	.18	.96	-.34	.35
	>10	<1	.54	.67	.42	-.78	1.86
		1~3	-.54	.27	.05	-1.06	-.01
		3~5	-.38	.19	.05	-.76	.00
		5~10	-.01	.18	.96	-.35	.34

Table 4-10 Variance analysis of operating post

Variable	Operating post	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Turnover intention	Operation support	45	2.99	1.54		
	Marketing	64	2.21	1.06		
	Business management	201	2.08	1.03	4.842	.000
	Risk control	30	2.44	1.47		
	Comprehensive management	96	2.29	1.20		
	Information technology	31	2.12	.93		
Organization identification	Operation support	45	4.66	.71		
	Marketing	64	4.81	.58		
	Business management	201	4.95	.59		
	Risk control	30	4.81	.58	3.676	.003
	Comprehensive management	96	4.81	.71		
	Information technology	31	4.51	.77		
	Information technology	31	3.39	.90		

Table 4-11 Multiple comparison of operating post variance analysis LSD

Dependent variable	(I) operating post	(J) operating post	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance☐	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Turnover intention	Operation support	Marketing	.78	.22	.00	.34	1.22
		Business management	.91	.19	.00	.53	1.28
		Risk control	.55	.27	.05	.01	1.08
		Comprehensive management	.70	.21	.00	.29	1.11
		Information technology	.87	.27	.00	.34	1.40
	Marketing	Operation support	-.78	.22	.00	-1.22	-.34
		Business management	.13	.17	.44	-.20	.45
		Risk control	-.23	.26	.36	-.74	.27
		Comprehensive management	-.08	.19	.65	-.45	.28
		Information technology	.09	.25	.73	-.41	.58
	Business management	Operation support	-.91	.19	.00	-1.28	-.53
		Marketing	-.13	.17	.44	-.45	.20

Dependent variable	(I) operating post	(J) operating post	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance☐	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Turnover intention	Business management	Risk control	-.36	.23	.11	-.81	.08
		Comprehensive management	-.21	.14	.14	-.49	.07
		Information technology	-.04	.22	.85	-.48	.40
		Operation support	-.55	.27	.05	-1.08	-.01
		Marketing	.23	.26	.36	-.27	.74
	Risk control	Business management	.36	.23	.11	-.08	.81
		Comprehensive management	.15	.24	.54	-.32	.62
		Information technology	.32	.30	.28	-.26	.90
		Operation support	-.70	.21	.00	-1.11	-.29
		Marketing	.08	.19	.65	-.28	.45
	Comprehensive management	Business management	.21	.14	.14	-.07	.49
		Risk control	-.15	.24	.54	-.62	.32
		Information technology	.17	.24	.47	-.30	.64

Dependent variable	(I) operating post	(J) operating post	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance☐	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Turnover intention	Information technology	Operation support	-.87	.27	.00	-1.40	-.34
		Marketing	-.09	.25	.73	-.58	.41
		Business management	.04	.22	.85	-.40	.48
		Risk control	-.32	.30	.28	-.90	.26
		Comprehensive management	-.17	.24	.47	-.64	.30

4.3.9 Number of children

Using number of children as a factor, one-way ANOVA was conducted with guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality as dependent variables, and the results are shown in Table 4-12. Significant inter-group differences are observed in turnover intention ($p<.05$), organizational identification ($p<.01$), LMX ($p<.01$) and traditionality ($p<.05$). Yet turnover intention and LMX did not pass the homogeneity of variance test. In other words, the variances are uneven. So, it is not suitable for variance test. Therefore, LSD test of multiple comparisons after ANOVA was carried out for organizational identification and traditionality only, and the results are shown in Table 4-13. According to mean comparison results, millennial employees without children (mean=4.53, SD=0.83) have a significantly lower level of organizational identification than employees with one child (mean=4.89, SD=0.60) and those with two children (mean=4.82, SD=0.68). The traditionality level of millennial employees without children (mean=2.89, SD=0.81) is significantly lower than that of employees with one child (mean=3.19, SD=1.08), those with two children (mean=3.35, SD=1.04), and those with three or more children (mean=4.25, SD=0.50).

Table 4-12 Variance analysis of number of children

Variable	Number of children	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Turnover intention	0	58	2.58	1.32		
	1	339	2.18	1.14	2.980	0.031
	2	67	2.29	1.19		
	≥3	3	3.42	1.63		
Organization identification	0	58	4.53	.83		
	1	339	4.89	.60	5.354	0.001
	2	67	4.82	.68		
	≥3	3	4.50	.50		

Variable	Number of children	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
Leader-Member exchange	0	58	4.16	.74	4.125	0.007
	1	339	4.45	.70		
	2	67	4.29	.77		
	≥3	3	3.73	.42		
Traditionality	0	58	2.89	.81	3.194	0.023
	1	339	3.19	1.08		
	2	67	3.35	1.04		
	≥3	3	4.25	.50		

4.3.10 Education

Using education as a factor, one-way ANOVA was conducted with guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality as dependent variables, and the results are shown in Table 4-14. Only the inter-group differences of LMX are significant ($p<.05$). But it did not pass the homogeneity of variance test. In other words, the variances are uneven. So, it is not suitable for variance test. Therefore, LSD test of multiple comparisons after ANOVA was not carried out.

4.3.11 After-tax annual income

Using after-tax annual income as a factor, one-way ANOVA was conducted with guanxi HRM practices, turnover intention, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality as dependent variables, and the results are shown in Table 4-15. Only the inter-group differences of LMX are significant ($p<.01$). But it did not pass the homogeneity of variance test. In other words, the variances are uneven. So, it is not suitable for variance test. Therefore, LSD test of multiple comparisons after ANOVA was not carried out.

Table 4-13 Multiple comparison of number of children variance analysis LSD

Dependent variable	(I) Length of service group	(J) Length of service group	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Organization identification	0	1	-.36	.09	.00	-.53	-.18
		2	-.29	.12	.01	-.51	-.06
		≥3	.03	.38	.93	-.71	.78
	1	0	.36	.09	.00	.18	.53
		2	.07	.09	.44	-.10	.23
		≥3	.39	.37	.29	-.34	1.12
	2	0	.29	.12	.01	.06	.51
		1	-.07	.09	.44	-.23	.10
		≥3	.32	.38	.39	-.42	1.07
	≥3	0	-.03	.38	.93	-.78	.71
		1	-.39	.37	.29	-1.12	.34
		2	-.32	.38	.39	-1.07	.42

Dependent variable	(I) Length of service group	(J) Length of service group	Mean difference (I-J)	S.D.	Significance	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Traditionality	0	1	-.30	.15	.04	-.60	-.01
		2	-.47	.19	.01	-.83	-.10
		≥3	-1.36	.62	.03	-2.58	-.15
	1	0	.30	.15	.04	.01	.60
		2	-.16	.14	.25	-.44	.11
		≥3	-1.06	.61	.08	-2.25	.13
	2	0	.47	.19	.01	.10	.83
		1	.16	.14	.25	-.11	.44
		≥3	-.90	.62	.15	-2.11	.32
	≥3	0	1.36	.62	.03	.15	2.58
		1	1.06	.61	.08	-.13	2.25
		2	.90	.62	.15	-.32	2.11

Table 4-14 Variance analysis of education

Variable	Education	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
	High school and below	1	3.80	-		
Leader-Member exchange	College	27	4.05	.82	3.651	0.013
	University undergraduate	349	4.37	.73		
	Master or above	90	4.54	.64		

Table 4-15 Variance analysis of after-tax annual income

Variable	After-tax annual income(K)	N	Mean	S.D.	F	Sig
	<80	56	4.10	.68		
Leader-Member exchange	80~150	244	4.37	.74	4.639	0.003
	150~250	121	4.52	.69		
	>250	46	4.47	.64		

4.4 Hypothesis testing

(1) Testing of main effect and mediating effect

The main effect of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry and the mediating effect of organizational identification and LMX therein are validated with reference to the procedure put forward by Baron and Kenny (1986) for validating the mediating effect. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis are shown in Table 4-16. (1) It can be known from Model 6 that guanxi HRM practices significantly and positively predict the turnover intention of millennial employees (β=-.442, p<0.001), validating H1; (2) Models 2 and 4 suggest that guanxi HRM practices significantly and negatively influence employees' organizational identification (β=-.286, p<0.001) and negatively influence employees' LMX (β=-.179, p<0.001), validating H2 and

H4; (3) Models 7 and 8 indicate that employees' organizational identification significantly and negatively predicts their turnover intention (β=-.341, p<0.001) and employees' LMX also shows a significantly negative correlation with their turnover intention (β=-.346, p<0.001). (4) Finally, the independent variable guanxi HRM practices and the mediator organizational identification were entered into the model at the same time. As shown in Model 9, organizational identification significantly and negatively predicts turnover intention (β=-.270, p<0.001), and the positive predictive effect of guanxi HRM practices on the millennial the turnover intention of employees is still significant (β=.393, p<0.001), but the effect is significantly weakened (β decreased from 0.442 to 0.393), indicating that organizational identification partially mediates the correlation. In other words, guanxi HRM practices lead to an increase in the turnover intention of employees by reducing their levels of organizational identification, validating H3. Similarly, as shown in Model 10, LMX significantly and negatively predicts turnover intention (β=-.236，p<0.001), and the positive predictive effect of guanxi HRM practices on the millennial the turnover intention of employees is still significant (β=.374, p<0.001), but the effect is significantly weakened (β decreased from .442 to .374), indicating that LMX also partially mediates the process where guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees, validating H5.

To test the robustness of the research conclusions, the bootstrap method was further used to verify the significance of the mediating effect. The sample size was set at 5,000 times; the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of organizational identification was [0.049,0.112]; and the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of LMX was [0.028,0.077]. So, the mediating effect of both can be considered significant.

Table 4-16 Regression analysis results of main effect and mediating effect

	Variable	OI		LMX		TI					
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Control variables	Gender	-.010	-.015	.100*	.097*	-.060	-.052	-.026	-.064	-.026	-.055
	Marital status	-.048	-.043	-.078	-.075	.094	.086	.067	.077	.066	.076
	Age	.097	.091	.037	.033	.016	.026	.029	.050	.035	.048
	Length of service	-.016	-.046	.000	-.018	-.083	-.037	-.083	-.089	-.042	-.048
	Operating post	.000	.002	-.021	-.020	-.077	-.079	-.084	-.077	-.085*	-.079
	Team size	-.074	-.051	-.059	-.046	.146**	.112**	.126**	.121**	.100*	.100*
	Number of children	-.030	-.031	.049	.048	.032	.033	.048	.022	.046	.026
	Education	.127**	.137**	.071	.077	-.074	-.090*	-.050	-.031	-.069	-.057
	After-tax annual income	.110*	.091	-.084	-.096	-.089	-.059	-.118*	-.051	-.085*	-.038
Independent variable	GXHRM		-.286***		-.179***		.442***			.393***	.374***

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Variable		OI		LMX				TI			
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Mediator	OI							-.341***		-.270***	
	LMX								-.346***		-.236***
R^2		.030	.110	.018	.047	.038	.230	.151	.152	.298	.295
$\triangle R2$		.049	.080	.037	.031	.057	.190	.112	.114	.258	.238
F		2.624**	6.747***	1.927*	3.313***	3.060**	14.917***	9.260***	9.369***	18.965***	17.313***

Note: *** indicates $p<0.001$, ** indicates $p<0.01$, and * indicates $p<0.05$.

GXHRM=Guangxi HRM; TI=Turnover Intention; OI=Organizational Identification; LMX=Leader Member Exchange; TRAD=Traditionality;

(2) Testing of moderating effect

According to the process of testing mediated moderation, the moderating effect of traditionality is tested. As shown in Model 11, the interaction of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality was constructed. Then the independent variable guanxi HRM practices, the moderator traditionality and the interaction of the two were entered into the model. Guanxi HRM practices significantly and negatively predict employees' organizational identification (β=-.182, p<0.001), further validating H2. Besides, the interaction of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality significantly and positively predict employees' organizational identification (β=.108, p<0.05). In other words, guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on organizational identification for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality, supporting H6a. Similarly, as shown in Model 12, guanxi HRM practices significantly and negatively predict employees' LMX (β=-.339, p<0.001), further validating H4, while the interactive items between guanxi HRM practices and traditionality can significantly and positively predict employees' LMX levels (β=.244, p<0.001), indicating that traditionality's moderation role in the relationship between guanxi HRM practices on LMX. In other words, guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on LMX for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality, supporting H7a.

With reference to the practice adopted by Mao *et al.* (2020) in their study, and based on the simple slope test procedure of Aiken and West (1991), traditionality was divided into a high group and a low group according to one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean. Then regressions of the mediators to the independent variables were done in sequence, as shown in Table 4-17. And the moderating effects were presented in Figure 4-1 to further illustrate the rules of the moderating effect.

Table 4-17 Regression analysis results of moderating effect

Variable		OI		LMX	
		Model 1	Model 11	Model 3	Model 12
Control variable	Gender	-.010	.091	.100*	.007

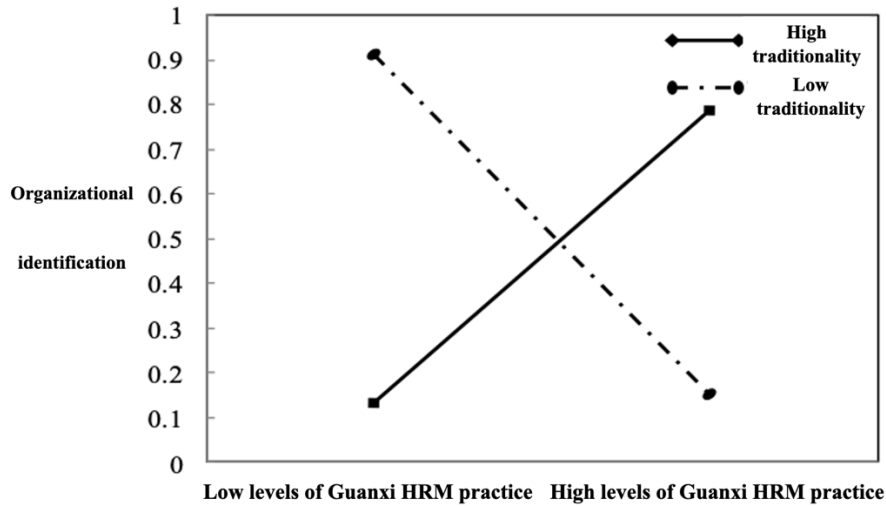| Variable		OI		LMX	
		Model 1	Model 11	Model 3	Model 12
Control variable	Marital status	-.048	-.061	-.078	-.011
	Age	.097	.017	.037	.057
	Length of service	-.016	-.007	.000	-.019
	Operating post	.000	-.022	-.021	-.009
	Team size	-.074	-.052	-.059	-.099*
	Number of children	-.030	.050	.049	-.050
	Education	.127**	.077	.071	.161***
	After-tax annual income	.110*	-.090	-.084	.100*
Independent variable	HRMGX		-.182***		-.339***
Moderator	TRAD		.026		.245***
Interaction	HRMGX* TRAD		.108*		.244***
	R^2	.030	.055	.018	.211
	$\triangle R2$	.049	.043	.037	.183
	F	2.624**	3.258***	1.927*	11.413***

Figure 4-1 The moderating effect of employees' traditionality on the correlation between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification

Regarding organizational identification, Figure 4-1 suggests that when employees' traditionality is low, the negative correlation between guanxi HRM practices and employees' organizational identification is significant, and the path coefficients are β=-0.152, *p*<0.05. When the traditionality is high, the correlation between guanxi HRM practices and employees' organizational identification is no longer significant (β=0.131，*p*>0.05), indicating that a higher level of traditionality will reduce the negative impact of guanxi HRM practices on employees' organizational identification and may even change its direction of impact.

In terms of LMX, Figure 4-2 suggests that when employees' level of traditionality is low, the negative correlation between guanxi HRM practices and LMX is significant, and the path coefficients are β= -0.236, *p*<0.001. When the level of traditionality is high, the correlation is no longer significant (β=-0.035，*p*>0.05). The regression lines of the employees with high levels of traditionality are flatter with smaller slope values, indicating that given the same level of change in guanxi HRM practices, there is a smaller degree of change in LMX of employees with high levels of traditionality. In other words, the LMX of employees with high levels of traditionality is less sensitive to guanxi HRM practices. In contrast, the regression lines of the employees with low levels of traditionality are steeper with higher

slope values, indicating that compared to employees with high levels of traditionality, employees with low levels of traditionality can experience lowered LMX levels caused by guanxi HRM practices to a greater extent.
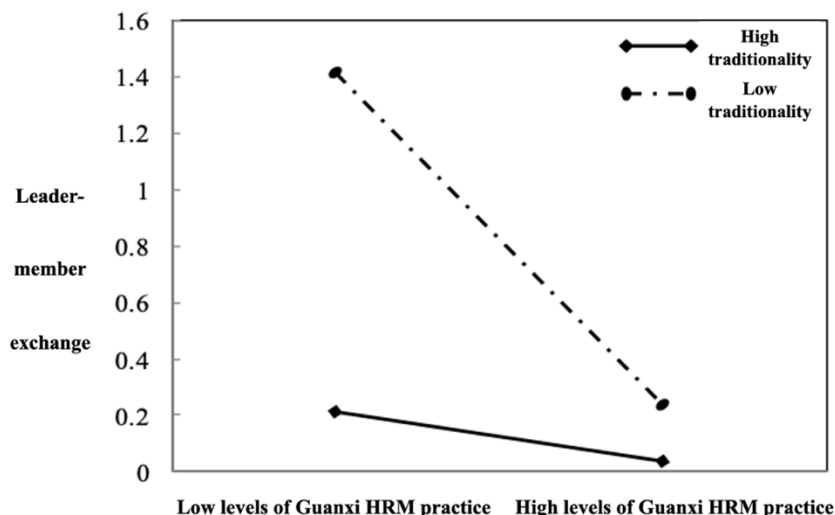

Figure 4-2 The moderating effect of employees' traditionality on the correlation between guanxi HRM practices and LMX

To test the hypothesis of the mediated moderation, reference was made to the relevant introductions to the test of mediated moderation in the book entitled *Empirical Method in Organization and Management Research* written by Chen, Tsui, and Farh (2013). Besides, with reference to the practice of Mao, Zhang, and Zhang (2020) in their study and the practice of Duan *et al.* (2016) in their study, sample Bootstrapping analyses were made in the Mplus software for 2000 times. The results indicated that the indirect effect of the interactive items of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention via organizational identification was -0.038, with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.075,-0.016], excluding 0, thereby supporting Hypothesis H6b. The indirect effect of the interactive items of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention via LMX is -0.079, with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.116,-0.054], excluding 0, thereby supporting Hypothesis H7b.

4.5 Hypothesis testing results

It is found through statistical analysis that the research hypotheses put forward in this

study are all supported by statistics, as shown in Table 4-18.

Table 4-18 Hypothesis testing results

No.	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Guanxi HRM practices are positively related to the turnover intention of millennials in the banking industry.	Supported
H2	Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to the organizational identification of millennial employees in the banking industry.	Supported
H3	Organizational identification mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.	Supported
H4	Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to LMX of millennial employees in the banking industry.	Supported
H5	LMX mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.	Supported
H6a	Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on organizational identification for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality.	Supported
H6b	Organizational identification mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.	Supported
H7a	Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and LMX of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on LMX for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality.	Supported
H7b	LMX mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.	Supported

Chapter 5: Discussions

Targeting millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry, this study explores the role paths and boundary conditions by which guanxi HRM practices influence employee turnover intention. Specifically, this study examines employees' perceived guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX, turnover intention and traditionality in Chinese state-owned banks. And relevant theoretical hypotheses are tested using the standardized hierarchical regression analysis procedure. This chapter will discuss the key variables and hypothesis testing results.

5.1 General

5.1.1 Guanxi HRM practices

Among the surveyed participants of this study, the mean value of the guanxi HRM practices perceived by millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry is 3.27, which is smaller than the mean value of 3.490 obtained by Wang *et al.* (2018) from their survey of the guanxi HRM practices perceived by employees from 17 units of different industries across 15 provinces in China, but greater than the mean value of 3.09 obtained by Chen *et al.* (2011) from their survey of 342 employees from 72 work teams in China. The six-point Likert scoring method is used in this study. The mean value of HRM practices is 3.27, which is slightly greater than the median score of 3. This indicates that guanxi HRM practices are indeed prevalent in Chinese state-owned banks, which might be because the participants of this study are from Chinese state-owned enterprises. Despite the continuous institutional transformation of Chinese SOEs since the Reform and Opening-up, the private guanxi practices of organizational leadership have always constituted some kind of substantive alternative to the normative organizational system. In other words, guanxi practices are still prevalent in Chinese SOEs (Shen, 2012).

In addition, this study uses millennial employees of Chinese banking industry as

participants. Its mean value of guanxi HRM practices is different from the mean values reported in the literature of other studies in the Chinese context, which indicates that the level of guanxi HRM practices varies from person to person and from industry to industry. Under the long-standing influence of traditional culture, especially Confucianism, Chinese culture attaches great importance to ethics, which has made guanxi a prevailing social phenomenon in China. It is particularly noteworthy that the Chinese guanxi network has a predominant differential pattern, with individuals often adopting different rules in their interactions with people in different types of guanxi (Zhang & Wang, 2014). This also means that in organizational contexts, individuals will adopt differential evaluation rules towards colleagues due to the different degrees of intimacy. Given that every employee in an organization has his or her own "circle" of affinity, their perceptions and evaluations of the same guanxi HRM practices also tend to be significantly different. In particular, for different industries, there are certain gaps in the level of guanxi HRM practices in organizations due to differences in organizational structure, management model and governance culture.

This study finds that employees working for units with different nature differ significantly in their perceived guanxi HRM practices. Specifically, the level of guanxi HRM practices perceived by employees working in a bank's branches is significantly higher than that perceived by those working in a bank's headquarter. There are some possible reasons. First, the management process of a branch is more relaxed compared to the management headquarter. And overall, branches are not as demanding as the management headquarters in terms of work skills and professional quality of employees, and therefore easier to implement guanxi practice. Therefore, in branches, employees perceive a higher level of guanxi HRM practices in the organization. Second, branches are smaller, so such concepts as "circle" and "affinity" are more easily magnified to become the focus of attention of the organization members. In contrast, management headquarters have relatively sounder systems such as stricter recruitment system, promotion system, and performance appraisal systems, making it more likely for employees to realize the match between work contributions and work results. Therefore, employees in branches perceive a higher degree of guanxi HRM practices in the bank, while employees in management headquarters

perceive a relatively lower degree of guanxi HRM practices in the bank.

In addition, this study finds that employees' perceived guanxi HRM practices also vary significantly as the organizational tenure varies. Specifically, the level of guanxi HRM practices perceived by millennial employees with less than five years of service is significantly higher than that perceived by employees with more than five years of service. In other words, the level of guanxi HRM practices perceived by millennial employees with longer organizational tenure is relatively lower compared to that perceived by millennial employees with shorter organizational tenure. There are some possible explanations for this result. First, compared to millennial employees with less than five years of service, millennial employees with five years or more of service in the bank have a better understanding of and higher adaptability to the unit as they have worked for a relatively long time. Therefore, when faced with possible guanxi HRM practices, they might not have excessively positive expectations for organizational management results, thereby avoiding a huge psychological gap. And their level of perceived guanxi HRM practices is also relatively not high. Second, millennial employees with longer years of service in the bank are relatively more stable compared with employees with shorter organizational tenure. Due to their long-term working experience, they might have formed strong psychological connections with the unit and thus have a high degree of recognition of the unit. Finally, the longer employees have worked in an organization, the more they may be inclined to react negatively to the phenomenon of the organization being affected by personal relationships in areas such as hiring, job assignment, compensation, promotion and performance appraisal, and thus the lower the level of their perceived guanxi HRM practices may be.

5.1.2 Turnover intention

According to the survey results of this study, the turnover intention mean of millennial employees is 2.25, which is relatively small, both smaller than the turnover intention mean of 3.12 obtained by Han (2016) from the survey of millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry and smaller than the turnover intention mean of 3.18 obtained by Ni (2017) from the survey of millennial knowledge-based employees. The relatively low turnover

intention of bank employees is consistent with China's social reality. First, state-owned banks in the earlier days were monopolized by the state. Working in a state-owned bank meant holding an "iron rice bowl". In the past, the semi-governmental functions of state-owned banks could bring employees a strong sense of superiority. Although state-owned banks have gradually completed the enterprise-oriented reform since the Reform and Opening-up, in China's current work culture, working in the banking industry is still a relatively decent job choice, and this occupation is still recognized and favored by a relatively large number of groups (Yu, 2019). Therefore, the turnover intention of employees in the banking industry may be low compared to employees of other occupations. Second, the current employment situation and economic environment make more millennial employees in the banking industry prone to reducing their job uncertainty, hence their low turnover intention.

This study finds that the turnover intention of millennial employees varies significantly as their domicile places vary. The turnover intention of the local millennial employees in the banking industry is significantly lower than that of their non-local counterparts. A possible explanation might be that locals may have a higher level of identification with their domicile places, which leads to a stronger sense of regional dependence and belonging, resulting in higher transfer costs. Besides, regional and urban-rural socio-cultural differences can prevent migrant workers from integrating into the local society or even render them discriminated against by locals, which stands in the way of this group's identification with their domicile places. As a result, the turnover intention of nonlocal millennial employees in the banking industry is relatively high (Ma *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, on the one hand, free from the strings of household register, nonlocal millennial employees in the banking industry might have a stronger inner motivation to seek better career development through job-hopping. Yet as mentioned earlier, locals are more drawn to the idea of working in banking units in the long run due to such characteristics of banks as job stability, good working environment and decent income. In other words, the turnover intention of locals is relatively low. On the other hand, compared to nonlocals, locals have better guanxi networks and connections, leading to their better advantages in completing various business targets and

indicators required by banks. Accordingly, they may be awarded with higher salaries and faster promotions, forming a virtuous cycle. Therefore, their turnover intention is significantly lower.

In addition, this study also finds that millennial employees in different operating posts differ significantly in terms of turnover intention. Specifically, the turnover intention of the millennial employees in operation support posts is significantly higher than that of the employees in marketing, business management, risk control, comprehensive management and information technology posts. This may be closely related to the characteristics of the operation support posts. In general, first, the operation support posts of banks entail a huge business volume, relatively high work pressure and long working hours, which makes it difficult for employees to achieve a healthy work-life balance, thereby more likely to trigger their turnover intention; second, operation support posts have high emotional and labor requirements for employees, who are required to patiently and meticulously handle work issues and provide services. And long hours of service work easily leads to the experience of emotional exhaustion by employees, causing them to frequently think of resignation. Finally, the salaries of operation support posts are generally low and promotion opportunities limited, hindering employees' career development, which tends to result in their relatively strong turnover tendency.

5.1.3 Organizational identification

According to the survey results of this study, the organizational identification mean of millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry is 4.83, which is very close to the organizational identification mean of 4.81 obtained by Li and Chen (2015) from a survey of 209 working employees in Chinese enterprise organizations (including real estate, information technology, retail chain, education and training, as well as pharmaceutical and biological industries), and slightly higher than the organizational identification mean of 4.51 obtained by Xiao, Liu, Wang, and Ding (2018) from a large installation business in Changsha, China. Self-determination theory holds that guanxi needs are one of the most basic psychological needs of individuals, and that individuals always tend to stay connected to

others through socialization so as to gain a sense of belonging and psychological attachment (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Organizational identification is a state in which individuals define themselves according to a specific organizational membership. It is individuals' perception of their belonging to a certain group. In a sense, organizational identification is one of the important ways for employees to realize their basic psychological needs (Zhang & Liu, 2016). It is found through the survey of this study that in the organizational context of the Chinese banking industry, employees generally have a relatively high level of organizational identification. This is probably because banks boast sound organizational reputation and organizational images, which can effectively meet employees' needs for self-esteem enhancement and belonging, hence their high levels of organizational identification. In addition, due to the different industry attributes, the public's perceptions and evaluations of industries also differ significantly. Therefore, the organizational identification levels of employees belonging to different industries also differ significantly.

This study finds that the turnover intention of employees varies significantly depending on their place of living before college, whether they are the only children, gender, domicile place and number of children. Specifically: (1) Place of living before college. This study finds that the level of organizational identification of millennial employees in the banking industry who lived in cities before college is significantly higher than that of millennial employees who lived in the countryside before college. A possible explanation is that millennial employees who lived in cities before college have a high level of socialization, and millennial employees who grew up in urban environments are relatively more familiar with and knowledgeable about banks than millennial employees who live in the countryside before college. And the frequency of interactions between individuals and organizations is one of the important antecedents of organizational identification (Dutton *et al.*, 1994). (2) Only child or not. This study finds that among millennial employees in the banking industry, the level of organizational identification of employees who are not the only children is significantly higher than that of the employees who are the only children. This may be because there is a high probability that families have more emotional resources and support for their only children. Thus, only children may have lower expectations for organizations

than non-only children, and their need for affiliation with organizations is not as strong as that of non-only children. Therefore, the level of organizational identification of millennial employees who are only children is significantly lower than that of employees who are not. (3) Gender. This study finds that among millennial employees in the banking industry, women have a higher level of organizational identification than men. This might be because in the current employment environment in China, a relatively large proportion of the population believes that women should focus more on career stability and the agreeableness of workplaces than men, and that working in a bank can better meet women's job needs. Therefore, the female millennial employees in the banking industry have a significantly higher level of organizational identification than their male counterparts. (4) Domicile place. This study finds that among millennial employees in the banking industry, the level of organizational identification of the local millennial employees is significantly higher than that of their nonlocal counterparts. A local millennial employee has a strong sense of belonging to and identification with the geographical area where the workplace is located, and this feeling may be translated into psychological attachment and connection to the organization, resulting in higher levels of organizational identification among local millennial employees. (5) Number of children. This study finds that among millennial employees in the banking industry, the level of organizational identification of those without children is significantly lower than that of those with one child or two children. For millennial employees, having children may mean that families will have higher demands for employees' economic base and emotional investment. The need for a stable source of income will make employees more prudent to establish their own connections with organizations and their jobs. In contrast, employees without children do not have a strong need for job stability. Their emotional attachment to organizations will be affected by more uncertain factors. Therefore, the level of their organizational identification is relatively lower compared with that of millennial employees with children.

5.1.4 LMX

According to the survey results of this study, the LMX mean of millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry is 4.39, which is lower than the LMX mean of 4.53 obtained

by Jiang and Yang (2014) from a survey of Chinese employees, and greater than the LMX mean of 2.48 obtained by Gutermann, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Boer, and Born (2016) from a survey of employees in Germany. According to social exchange theory, leaders tend to establish different LMX relationships with different employees. Low-quality LMX relationships imply that the exchange between leaders and members is based solely on formal contracts, or in other words, primarily economic exchanges, while high-quality LMX relationships are based on mutual trust and loyalty between leaders and members, and manifest social-emotional exchanges that go beyond those agreed upon in formal contracts. Therefore, different employees differ significantly in their perceived exchange relationships with their leaders. It is found through the survey of this study that the mean value of employees' perceived LMX is relatively high in the organizational context of Chinese banking industry. This may be because nepotism and kinship are more intricate in the Chinese state-owned banking industry (Zhang, 1990), and employees realize that they can make more attempts to gain career advancement or preferential resources by establishing good exchange relationships with their leaders. Thus, their desire to connect with their leaders to achieve quality exchange relationships is stronger, and this psychological expectation may lead to a higher level of perceived LMX.

This study finds that the LMX of millennial employees can vary significantly depending on their domicile places. Specifically, the level of LMX of the local millennial employees in the banking industry is significantly higher than that of their nonlocal counterparts. A possible explanation is that compared to nonlocal millennial employees, local millennial employees have accumulated more human resources and built a larger guanxi network due to the advantage of their birthplace. Thus, it is easier for them to become "insiders" and engage in further social-emotional exchanges with leaders, or in other words, to form higher-quality LMX. Emotionally, locals have a strong sense of identification and natural familiarity with their workplaces and the areas in which their workplaces are located. And these friendly emotions may motivate them to make more active efforts to establish quality exchange relationships with leaders in the organization, which may result in a relatively high level of LMX.

5.1.5 Traditionality

According to the survey results of this study, the mean value of traditionality of millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry is 3.18, which is lower than the mean value of traditionality of 3.53 obtained by Zhang and Yang (2015) from their survey of the employees in Chinese enterprises. This study finds that the level of traditionality of millennial employees in the banking industry has not reached a high level. Traditionality describes the unique psychological characteristics that individuals embody in such aspects as social orientations and values. The higher levels of traditionality individuals have, the more they believe in unconditional and uncritical respect for, obedience to and trust in authority. Besides, individuals with high levels of traditionality have strong family and racial values. In life and work, they tend to uphold respect for and filial piety to seniors and ancestors, absolute loyalty to the collective and observance of such codes of conduct as non-defiance of superiors or non-transgression of boundaries. The characteristic of high levels of traditionality is in conflict with the personality characteristics of millennial employees to some extent. The millennials grew up amidst socio-economic globalization and witnessed the major conflicts and integration between Eastern and Western ideas and diversified cultures. In this context, they might have not fully inherited or recognize the traditional ways of thinking and cognitive concepts of their ancestors, hence their lower levels of traditionality.

This study finds that the traditionality of millennial employees differs significantly depending on the differences in whether they are only children, their gender and number of children. Specifically: (1) Whether they are only children. This study finds that the traditionality levels of millennial employees in the banking industry who are only children are higher than those who are not. This might be caused by the fact that only children shoulder a heavier responsibility and obligation of carrying on the family line and families have higher requirements for only children in terms of filial piety and submissiveness. Having been influenced in such a family atmosphere for a long time, only children are more likely to have higher levels of traditionality. (2) Gender. This study finds that the traditionality levels of male millennial employees in the banking industry is higher than those of females, which is consistent with the results of the studies carried out by Xu and Cao

(2000) as well as Zhang *et al.* (2000). The reason for the fact that males have higher levels of traditionality than females might be the influences of cultural agents and cultural regularity. First, the traditional personality ideal positions the male image as a Confucian personality, which makes men more focused on filial piety and respect for ancestors, conservation and endurance, as well as fatalism and defensiveness; second, traditional values have a huge impact on men's self-positioning, making them more prone to power-worshiping ideas and to developing more patriarchal-centric values. As a result, men generally have higher levels of traditionality than women. (3) Number of children. This study finds that millennial employees without children have significantly lower levels of traditionality than those with one child, those with two children and those with three or more children. A possible explanation is that having a child or children enables employees to achieve the identity change from independent individuals to parents, giving them more responsibilities and obligations. This change makes employees think more about the meaning and importance of inheritance in their life and work, so that employees are more aware of the importance of such values as submission to authority, filial piety and respect for ancestors, as well as conservation and endurance. And their ways of thinking and cognitive perceptions will also change. In other words, compared with millennial employees without children, millennial employees with a child or children have higher levels of traditionality.

5.2 Discussions of Hypothesis testing results

5.2.1 Guanxi HRM practices and the turnover intention of employees

Through standard hierarchical regression analysis procedures, this study validates the direct effect of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees. The results indicate that guanxi HRM practices may significantly increase the turnover intention of employees. Guanxi HRM practices emphasize that managers make decisions on task assignment, rewards, performance appraisals and promotions based on their affinity with their subordinates. And for most employees who are "outsiders" and not close enough to their managers, guanxi practices can result in increased levels of turnover intention by

reducing employees' trust in the organization and leaders, leading to a perception of organizational injustice and triggering a gap in employees' expectations. Although the association between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention has not been extensively studied in existing literature, there are still quite a few relevant studies that provide a good reference for the empirical findings of this study. Specifically, Zheng, Shi, and Zheng (2008) validated through empirical research that employees' trust in their direct superiors and organizations has a negative effect on their turnover intention, and the lower the trust level, the higher their degree of the turnover intention. Yang *et al.* (2014) found that employees' judgments and feelings about justice significantly affect their turnover intention; Wang *et al.* (2017) also validated the negative predictive effect of organizational justice climate on the turnover intention of employees. In addition, Wang and Yang (2017) found that the bigger expectation gap of the millennial knowledge-based employees, the higher their likelihood of experiencing negative emotions, which further leads to the higher levels of their turnover intention. On the whole, the conclusions of these studies are consistent with the results of this study, thereby providing strong theoretical support for the results of this study.

In Chinese organizations, which have long been known for "guanxi orientation", leaders act as the agents of organizations to communicate and connect with employees in their daily work. And this mutual influences and interactions between leaders and employees are part of the formal and informal procedures in the operation of an organization (Yu & Fu, 2016). Influenced by the guanxi culture, leaders tend to base their HRM decisions on their affinity with employees. First, employees' trust in the organization and managers is often based on their overall impression of the decisions and actions of the organization managers as well as such factors as the organizational governance mechanism and incentive system (Zheng *et al.*, 2008). When the level of guanxi HRM practices in the organization is high, employees' trust in the organization and managers will significantly reduce. And when employees believe that the organization and its agents (leaders) cannot be trusted, their psychological attachment to the organization will significantly reduce, making them more likely to think about leaving. Second, guanxi practice tends to bring about a perception of organizational injustice to employees. From the perspective of social contrast, when

employees' input-return ratio at work is similar to that of the referents, their willingness to cooperate with the organization and other employees can be better nurtured, which will enhance their tendency to maintain the status quo. On the contrary, the perception of injustice will lead to the turnover intention of employees to redress the imbalance between work input and return. Finally, the low work feelings that guanxi practices bring to employees and their high job expectations tend to create a huge psychological gap. This gap is particularly prevalent among millennial employees (Yang *et al.*, 2014), and it can often trigger employee turnover. Based on the above analysis, guanxi HRM practices significantly increase the turnover intention of employees. Therefore, H1 (Guanxi HRM practices are positively related to the turnover intention of millennials in the banking industry.) is supported.

5.2.2 The mediating role of organizational identification

This study finds that employees' organizational identification has an important mediating effect on the process by which guanxi HRM practices influence their turnover intention. Specifically, guanxi HRM practices lead to increased turnover intention of employees via reduced organizational identification. A large number of empirical studies have explored the mediating effect of organizational identification as a work attitude embodying an individual's dependence on and sense of belonging to the organization in the process where different factors influence the turnover intention of employees, validating that decreased organizational identification is one of the important antecedents of high turnover intention (Yuan *et al.*, 2014; Zhang & Liu, 2016; Wu *et al.*, 2018; De Moura *et al.*, 2009; Turkoglu & Dalgic, 2019). Employees' low levels of organizational identification often originate from the organization's failure to meet their needs for material resources and emotional support. This gap between reality and psychological expectations can easily lead to the idea of disengagement from the current organization, or in other words, a high level of turnover intention. Thus, employees' organizational identification has a significantly negative predictive effect on turnover intention.

Organizational identification is one of the important ways for employees to acquire a sense of self-concept in the workplace, emphasizing the sense of emotional belonging,

loyalty, and value match that come from attachment to membership within an organization (Ma *et al.*, 2011). This strong connection with the organization that goes beyond a contractual relationship is rooted to a greater extent in recognition of the organization's image and reputation, trust in the organization, perceptions of justice in the organization as a workplace, and support for the organization's cultural institutions (Tyler & Blader, 2003; Fuller *et al.*, 2006; Chen, 2018). And guanxi HRM practices will lead to a lack of justice and openness in the distribution of salaries and benefits, performance appraisals and promotions within the enterprise. First, when an organization has guanxi practices beyond its articles of association and systems, employees will reevaluate the image and reputation of the organization and hold that the organization has failed to fulfill the agreed requirements, which will break the psychological contract and lead to reduced organizational identification. Second, guanxi HRM practices lead to employees' decreased trust in the organization, and a low level of organizational trust can increase the uncertainty of employees at work, which is not conducive to meeting employees' needs for psychosocial resources, thus leading to decreased organizational identification (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Last, guanxi practices emphasize that managers take the degree of affinity into consideration while making management decisions, which will inevitably cause organizations and managers to treat employees differently. And employees' perception of being treated differently will affect not only the formation of their sense of self-concept, but also their positioning of their status and identity in the organization, which will cause them to depart from the self-definition of membership within the organization, weaken their sense of support for the organizational culture and system, and ultimately reduce their sense of organizational identification. And decreased organizational identification will result in increased turnover intention. Thus, H2 (Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to the organizational identification of millennial employees in the banking industry.) and H3 (Organizational identification mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.) are supported.

5.2.3 The mediating role of LMX

This study finds that employees' LMX has an important mediating effect in the process

by which guanxi HRM practices influence their turnover intention. Specifically, guanxi HRM practices lead to increased turnover intention of employees via reduced level of LMX. With regard to the significant negative predictive effect of LMX on the turnover intention of employees, the results of this study are in line with the findings of scholars such as Xiao and Zhao (2017).While studying the effect mechanism of ethical leadership on the turnover intention of employees in the Chinese organizational context, Xiao and Zhao (2017) introduced LMX as an intermediary variable to establish the association between LMX and turnover intention. They proposed that as the quality of LMX increases, employees' loyalty to and satisfaction with their leaders will continue to increase, which leads to a significant decrease in their turnover intention. LMX describes the degree of resource exchange and support between leaders and employees (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). When the quality of LMX is low, employees with low levels of LMX are more inclined to change their current situation by leaving the organization, or in other words, higher levels of turnover intention, given that employees are more prone to holding negative emotional responses to the organization and leaders, and that it is difficult for them to produce good expectations for their career development prospects in the organization.

In the context of the Chinese culture that underlines interpersonal relationships, high-quality LMX have a positive impact on both leaders and employees. Specifically, the establishment of good exchange relationships between leaders and subordinates is conducive to leadership effectiveness, while subordinates' maintenance of sound exchange relationships with leaders can help better meet their own needs (Yu & Liang, 2002). The quality of LMX often depends on such elements as understanding, trust, communication, needs, as well as help between leaders and members, which are often negatively affected by guanxi HRM practices. On the one hand, leaders serve as executors of organizational decisions and dischargers of responsibilities. When guanxi HRM practices occur in an organization, employees transfer their negative evaluations and negative emotions about unfair treatment to leaders, thereby reducing their trust in leaders. This is not conducive to communication and mutual assistance between the two parties, resulting in employees' significantly decreased levels of LMX. On the other hand, guanxi HRM practices give

employees a clearer sense of their organizational positioning. When employees compare the results of their work to the small number of employees who benefit from guanxi practices, the psychological imbalance created by relative compensation differences can easily make it difficult for them to establish deeper social exchange relationships with organizations and leaders. In general, guanxi HRM practices are not conducive for employees to establish high-quality LMX relationships, and low-quality LMX relationships can lead to increased turnover intention. Thus, H4 (Guanxi HRM practices are negatively related to LMX of millennial employees in the banking industry.), H5 (LMX mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention of millennial employees.) are supported.

5.2.4 The moderating role of traditionality

The influences of culture cannot be neglected while discussing employees' psychology and behaviors in the major context of Chinese culture. In the modern society characterized by increasingly closer interactions between diversified cultures, people may differ from each other more and more in the traditional ways of thinking as they are increasingly seeking independent personality. In particular, currently millennial employees, represented by the post-80s and post-90s, are entering into the labor market in large numbers. Their work attitudes may have greater individual differences (Wang *et al.*, 2012). Individual differences in such aspects as ideas and thoughts, value orientations and cognitive attitudes have a significant influence on the ultimate effect of guanxi HRM practices. The results of a large number of empirical studies conducted in the past on management issues in Chinese enterprises also indicate that employees who uphold different traditionality values exhibit different attitudes and behavioral outcomes when confronted with the same organizational management scenarios (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Zhou & Long, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2014; Zhang & Yang, 2015; Yu *et al.*, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Farh *et al.*, 2007; Wang, 2014; Wu *et al.*, 2019). Through empirical analysis, this study finds that the negative impacts of guanxi HRM practices on organizational identification and LMX also differ in laws of action due to the differences in employees' traditionality level. Specifically, for employees with lower levels of traditionality, the negative predictive effect of guanxi HRM practices on organizational identification and LMX is stronger.

Employees with stronger traditionality have a higher level of recognition and acceptance of such traditional cultural values as submission to authority, filial piety and respect for ancestors, conservation and endurance, fatalism and defensiveness, as well as male dominance. This means employees' acquiescence and recognition of "the distinction of leaders as superiors and members as inferiors" in superior-subordinate relationships. In organizations, this group of employees tend to show higher levels submission to authority. Even if leaders exert influences beyond role constraints on them, they will also tend to trust, respect and obey unconditionally and uncritically (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, employees with high levels of traditionality are more tolerant of guanxi HRM practices in an organization. They exhibit higher levels of acceptance of and obedience to guanxi practices, which are management decisions that break the organization's established allocation rules and regulations. Besides, they are more likely to ignore conflicts between the way the organization operates and their own interests. As a result, their sense of identification with the organization and exchange relationships with leaders are less negatively affected by guanxi HRM practices. In comparison, employees with low levels of traditionality tend to uphold the principle of balanced reciprocity in an organization due to their weak sense of hierarchy. When guanxi practices highlighting allocation of resources based on the degree of affinity occur in an organization, they are more inclined to detach from the organization and reduce the quality of the exchange relationships with the managers who serve as agents of the organization to achieve balanced reciprocity. Thus, for employees with low levels of traditionality, guanxi HRM practices will reduce their organizational identification and LMX to a larger extent. Therefore, H6a (Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on organizational identification for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those who are higher on traditionality.), H6b (Organizational identification mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.), H7a (Traditionality moderates the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and LMX of millennial employees such that guanxi HRM practices has a stronger negative impact on LMX for employees lower on traditionality as compared to those

who are higher on traditionality.), and H7b (LMX mediates the interactive effect of guanxi HRM practices and traditionality on turnover intention of millennial employees in the banking industry.) are supported.

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Chapter 6: Conclusions

Based on the analyses and discussions of the key variables and hypothesis testing results, this chapter summarizes the findings of this study, highlight relevant practical implications from such aspects as guanxi HRM practices, organizational identification, LMX and traditionality, and finally discusses the limitations of this study and prospects for future studies.

6.1 Research conclusions

Guanxi HRM practices are present and prevalent in Chinese organizations, and even more so in state-owned banks where kinship and nepotism are more intricate. Guanxi HRM practices can easily cause employees to experience confusion about procedural justice in the organization, which can negatively affect their work attitudes and behaviors. This study constructs a theoretical model to explore the mechanism by which guanxi HRM practices in the Chinese banking industry influence the turnover intention of millennial employees. To this end, this study introduces organizational identification and LMX as mediators in an aim to identify the specific paths through which guanxi HRM practices lead to employees' increased turnover intention by reducing their level of organizational identification and quality of LMX. In addition, this study introduces traditionality as a moderator with a view to exploring the possible boundary role that traditionality may play in the process where guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees.

Through survey method, this study collected 467 valid questionnaires from millennial employees in the banking industry. Testing of hypotheses was validated through standardized hierarchical regression analyses. The results are as follows: (1) Guanxi HRM practices is significantly and positively related to the turnover intention of millennial employees. (2) Employees' organizational identification partially mediates the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention. (3) LMX partially mediates the relationship between

guanxi HRM practices and turnover intention. (4) Traditionality can moderate the negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification. The higher levels of traditionality employees have, the lower negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and organizational identification. (5) Traditionality can positively moderate the negative predictive role of guanxi HRM practices on employees' LMX. The higher levels of traditionality employees have, the lower negative relationship between guanxi HRM practices and employees' LMX.

The theoretical contributions of this study are as follows: First, with millennial employees in the banking industry as the participants, this study establishes the relationship between guanxi HRM practices and the turnover intention of employees and validates the positive predictive effect of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees. On the one hand, it enriches the research on the outcome variables of guanxi HRM practices and improves the research and thinking on the management issues with Chinese characteristics; on the other hand, it contributes to the research on the antecedents of turnover intention, which is conducive to improving the theoretical model of turnover.

Second, this study explores the mediating effect of organizational identification and LMX respectively on the process by which guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees. It has opened the "black box" where guanxi HRM practices in Chinese banks influence the turnover intention of employees. It helps to explain and answer the question of how guanxi HRM practices affect the turnover intention of employees. And it enriches the research on the paths by which guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees.

Last but not least, this study explores the moderating role employees' traditionality plays in the process by which guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees. People are not standardized products, and different individuals vary from each other significantly in terms of cognitive patterns and behavioral responses. This study further considers the impact of individual differences on the research framework and uses traditionality as a moderator to conduct the analysis. Th research results can help improve the study of the effectiveness of guanxi HRM practices.

6.2 Practical implications

The present study, as an empirical study based on a survey of the millennial employees in the banking industry, finds that guanxi HRM practices can reduce employees' level of identification with the organization on the one hand, and work against employees' efforts to build high-quality LMX relationships with leaders on the other hand, thereby leading to employees' significantly increased turnover intention. Besides, employees' traditionality has a moderating effect on the process by which guanxi HRM practices affect their turnover intention. This result can provide some reference for guanxi HRM practices in the banking industry. The practical implications of this study are elaborated on below from three aspects, namely, implications for banks, implications for bank managers and implications for individual employees.

6.2.1 Implications for banks

For banks, high levels of guanxi HRM practices in the organization are not conducive for employees to form identification with the organization or seek relational exchange with leaders. This can significantly increase the turnover intention of millennial employees, thereby negatively affecting the stability and cohesion within the organization. For this reason, banks should reduce the degree of guanxi HRM practices by reasonably enhancing the transparency of resources and results allocation system and process, fostering an enterprise soft environment featured by openness, transparency and fair competition, and providing fertile soil for employees to establish high-quality LMX relationships; Besides, efforts can be made from the following two aspects to improve employees' organizational identification levels. First, establish a good corporate image by assuming respective social responsibilities and fostering a suitable work environment. On the other hand, it can help enhance employees' sense of ownership and sense of belonging, thus promoting millennial employees to establish the goal of common development with the enterprise and increasing their levels of organizational identification. Second, actively nurture the corporate culture. Most millennial employees have received higher education and are more focused on the

realization of their self-worth. So, they tend to accept the corporate culture that can better provide employees with career development channels and growth. In order to strengthen employees' organizational identification, it is necessary for an enterprise to shape an organizational culture that better resonates with millennial employees based on its core values, so that employees will recognize and accept the organization more and align their personal values with the organizational values. In addition, this study finds that the levels of guanxi HRM practices in the organization perceived by millennial employees vary significantly depending on the nature of the banking units they are working for. Besides, employees also differ in their degrees of perception and acceptance of guanxi HRM practices as their organizational tenure in the unit differs. Based on these results, in the process of creating an atmosphere of organizational justice and reducing the level of guanxi HRM practices, enterprises need to implement different management strategies for branches and management headquarters. In addition, while detailing management rules, enterprises should increase the weight of the assessment of employees' organizational tenure in order to carry out management work more accurately and achieve the best management results.

6.2.2 Implications for bank managers

6.2.2.1 Improve the HRM system

As emphasized by a number of scholars in their studies, China is a typical country characterized by officialdom, guanxi orientation and circle consciousness, with "guanxi" deeply rooted in the social ethics underscored by Confucianism. Confucianism holds that individuals exist by interacting and establishing relationships with others, and the pan-familism of the Confucian culture has led to the prevalence of family-like relationships in the Chinese society (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013). And the prevalence of such relationships and guanxi may lead to more frequent guanxi HRM practices in Chinese organizations, especially for banks with prominent "insider control" features and serious residuals of the "officialdom" system. In the guanxi-oriented Chinese society, the prevalence of guanxi in organizations can have a significant impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, it is critical for managers to weigh and balance guanxi HRM practices in their organizations.

For this reason, managers should be aware of the negative impact that guanxi practices can have on employees and organizations, revisit the extent of guanxi practices in organizations and, accordingly, improve organizational culture, optimize the HRM systems, and ensure that the majority of employees have a just perception of resource allocation in organizations. Some scholars suggest that individual-level guanxi practices can motivate employees to produce better job performance, while only group-level guanxi practices can weaken employees' perceptions of justice and thus undermine job performance (Fu *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, from a dialectical perspective, guanxi practices are not all negative for organizations and can even better motivate their beneficiaries, but they may also cause employees to experience demotivation as a result of the unjust distribution rules (Chen & Chen, 2009). Therefore, in management practices, managers should actively promote the openness and transparency of the reward distribution system and treat each subordinate fairly. In the appraisal design, efforts should be made to reduce the weight of subjective evaluation, enhance the weight of objective indicators such as the amount of savings and loans, income from intermediate business, non-performing loans ratio and the quantity of various products marketed, to fully recognize and respect the work contributions of employees and ensure a balance between employees' input and gains in the work, so as to motivate employees to form a sense of identification with and a sense of belonging to the organization. The weight of bundled appraisal of the performance of both managers and employees should be increased. In the annual appraisal as well as promotion and transfer, mutual evaluation between superiors and subordinates should be added to promote the superior-subordinate exchange relationships, reduce employees' turnover intention, and ultimately fundamentally avoid the negative impact of guanxi practices on employees who have different degrees of affinity to the leaders, thereby achieving win-win between organizations and employees.

6.2.2.2 Foster employees' organizational identification

With the continuous development of modern enterprise management, employees, especially key employees, play an increasingly important role in organizations, and human resources have become the core resources of enterprises. Employees' psychological connection to the organization and their emotional attachment to the organization in terms

of the sense of belonging, pride and loyalty will largely affect their work attitudes and behavioral performance, which will ultimately have an important impact on the operation and development of enterprises. Therefore, bank managers need to fully understand and recognize the formation mechanism of employees' organizational identification and its influence and strike a balance between these two aspects in management practices. They should not only foster employees' organizational identification through various ways and avoid negative factors that may reduce employees' organizational identification, but also consider the influence of organizational identification on the formation of employees' work attitudes and externalization of work behaviors, so as to achieve the long-term development of the organization. The bank's existing group organizations, such as trade unions and youth league committees, can be utilized to listen to employees' demands, resolve conflicts and organize various recreational activities, so as to enhance the bond between different employees and the coherence between employees and organizations.

6.2.2.3 Strengthen LMX

LMX focuses on the exchange relationships between leaders and employees. Employees with quality LMX relationships, based on a sense of reciprocal obligation, tend to put more work and support into the organization and leaders, which triggers a series of positive impacts. Therefore, business managers need to establish high-quality LMX with subordinates because LMX quality may have on employees' work attitudes and behavioral performance.

Specifically, managers need to give employees compassionate care in life and work and give positive feedback on employees' work results. They should also focus on positive communication and exchanges with employees and give employees a certain degree of job autonomy instead of mere task assignment, so as to close the distance with employees and inspire employees' willingness to follow. Besides, establishing good LMX entails eliminating employees' stereotype of hierarchy and barriers. On the one hand, managers can actively foster a work atmosphere underpinned by equality between superior and subordinate roles to address employees' concerns. On the other hand, such interactive platforms as "Leader-Member Role Exchange Day" and "Leader-Member Exchange Day" can be used to

promote mutual understanding between leaders and employees, strengthen leaders' connections with employees, and ultimately facilitate the formation of high-quality LMX relationships.

6.2.2.4 Pay attention to the traditionality of employees

Employees with high levels of traditionality are more inclined to abide by traditional values, while employees with low levels of traditionality are more likely to uphold equality and openness. Therefore, even in the face of the same management situations and events, individuals with different levels of traditionality may have different results in their attitude changes and behavioral performance. Because of this, enterprises cannot simply treat employees as standardized products to implement non-differential management in HRM practices. Instead, they need to pay more attention to individual differences, especially the uniqueness of individuals in terms of thoughts and ideas, value orientations and cognitive attitudes. As competition between banks gets more and more fierce, the number of temporary and emerging business jobs is increasing year by year for employees in the personal banking business department of banks. Employees with high levels of traditionality tend to obey the temporary assignments of managers, while it is necessary to communicate more with employees with low levels of traditionality before work arrangements are made, or more targeted arrangements need to be made in performance appraisals. Managers can leverage scientific tools to measure the levels of traditionality of different employees and thus implement different management measures. For employees with low levels of traditionality, managers can apply Western management theories more.

In addition, more attention should be paid to the sense of justice and emotional problems of this group of employees, and more guidance and training can be provided to them in order to reduce their probability of exhibiting behaviors that go against organizational development. For example, organizations can conduct emotional management training among employees with low levels of traditionality, so as to help them better adapt to the organizational environment in the Chinese context and enable them to bring their talents into full play in organizations. For employees with high levels of traditionality, it is necessary to strengthen communication between superiors and

subordinates, help employees eliminate concerns about the organization and leaders, and use a good working environment to ease the suppression of employees' competencies by high levels of traditionality.

6.2.3 Implications for individual employees

For employees themselves, enhancing organizational identification and building quality exchange relationships with leaders can help increase career stability. Therefore, on the one hand, employees should actively rely on organizations to find their own sense of belonging, pay attention to organizational development goals, strive to align their own goals with the organizational goals, and strengthen their psychological connection with the organization; on the other hand, when employees have established high-quality LMX relationships with leaders, leaders and employees have a higher sense of mutual trust, and leaders are more inclined to treat employees as "insiders" and accordingly provide more preferential resources and emotional support to employees. Thus, employees should take an initiative to establish high-quality exchange relationships with leaders.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Due to constraints in time and conditions, this study still has some limitations, making further exploration and improvement necessary in subsequent research. The main limitations are: (1) This study adopted cross-sectional design, with the questionnaires answered by employees at the same point in time and in a relatively single setting. In fact, a time-lag effect exists as to the impact of guanxi HRM practices on the turnover intention of employees, and it is difficult to fully infer causality between variables using cross-sectional study. If conditions allow, future research may consider designing longitudinal studies for long-term follow-up, increasing the sources of survey data, and using a more sophisticated and appropriate research method to further sort out the causal relationships between variables. (2) In this study, the scales used for the mediators organizational identification and LMX and the dependent variable turnover intention are all translated from scales developed by foreign scholars. Although the scales selected are relatively authoritative ones, there may be

some limitations in directly applying Western scales to the Chinese context. Future research may consider developing independent scales that can better match the Chinese context and Chinese characteristics for each variable based on the cultural context of specific Chinese organizations. (3) This study selects the millennial employees in the Chinese banking industry as the participants. The sample size and scope are relatively limited. Future research may enlarge the scope of participants and increase the sample size to explore whether the mechanisms and boundary conditions by which guanxi HRM practices influence the turnover intention of employees are equally applicable in other industries.

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Appendix

A Survey Questionnaire for Millennial Employees in Banks

Respected Madam/Sir:

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire! This questionnaire is anonymous. It does not involve your personal privacy or the bank's trade secrets. It is strictly confidential in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Statistical Law of the People's Republic of China. The survey results are for the purpose of academic research only. There is no right or wrong answer to all the questions in this questionnaire. Your personal experiences and true feelings are the best answers to all the questions. To ensure the quality of scientific research, we hope you will select options truthfully. Thank you for your support and cooperation!

Note: Millennial employees refer to employees born in or after 1980.

Part 1 Survey items

I. Below are some descriptions of the bank you are currently working in. Please choose the one that best matches your real experience and tick the corresponding number.

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Many colleagues join our bank through guanxi.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	In our bank, many people are promoted through guanxi.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	In our bank, supervisors often decide how to distribute rewards based on their guanxi with subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6

4	In our bank, supervisors often decide how to assign tasks based on their guanxi with subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	In our bank, performance appraisals tend to be influenced by guanxi.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Our bank has procedures in place to collect accurate information for the purpose of performance appraisal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Our bank has procedures in place to allow employees to appeal or challenge performance appraisals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Our bank has procedures in place to allow performance appraisals to represent the opinions of all relevant staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Our bank has procedures in place to designate a set of standards that enable performance appraisals to be carried out consistently.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Our bank has procedures in place to listen to relevant staff's opinions on the impacts of performance	1	2	3	4	5	6

appraisals.

No.	Item						
11	Our bank has procedures in place to provide effective feedback on performance appraisals and their implementation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	Our bank has procedures in place to enable employees to gain clarification or additional information on performance appraisals.	1	2	3	4	5	6

II. Below are some descriptions of your feelings towards your immediate supervisor. Please choose the one that best matches your real situation and tick the corresponding number.

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
13	In general, I am very clear whether my supervisor is satisfied with my job performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I think my supervisor knows very well my problems and needs in work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I think my supervisor knows my potential very well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	No matter how much authority my supervisor has, he/she would use his/her power to help me solve my	1	2	3	4	5	6

	work problems.						
17	No matter how much authority my supervisor has, he/she would sacrifice his/her interests to help me get rid of work dilemmas when I need him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I trust my supervisor enough to defend and explain the decisions he/she makes even when he/she is absent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I have a very good relationship with my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6

III. Below are some descriptions of your feelings towards the bank you are currently working in. Please choose the one that best matches your real situation and tick the corresponding number.

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
20	When someone criticizes the bank I am working for, I also feel insulted personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I very much want to know how others look at our bank.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	When talking about our bank, I usually say "we" instead of "they".	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	I regard our bank's success as my own success as well.	1	2	3	4	5	6

No.	Item						
24	When someone praises our bank, I also feel praised personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	When the outside world (media) criticizes our bank, I feel very embarrassed.	1	2	3	4	5	6

IV. Below are some descriptions of the status of your work. Please choose the one that best matches your true feelings and tick the corresponding number.

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
26	I have thought about leaving the current organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I plan to leave my current organization in 6 months.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	I am currently looking for other job opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	I am now thinking about leaving my current organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6

V. Below are some descriptions of your views of Chinese traditional ideas. Please choose the one that best matches your real situation and tick the corresponding number.

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
30	The leader of a unit is like the head of a family, and employees should obey his decisions on all unit matters.	1	2	3	4	5	6

31	The best way to avoid mistakes is to follow the elders' instructions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	Before marriage, a woman should obey her father; after marriage, she should listen to her husband.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	When a dispute arises, the most senior person should be asked to uphold justice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	Children should respect the people their parents respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part 2 Background (Please tick your choice and write on the lines if necessary)

1.   You place of living before college is:

①A city   ②Countryside

2.   You are the only child of your family:

①Yes   ②No

3.   Your gender:

①Male   ②Female

4.   Your marital status:

①Married   ②Unmarried

5. Your age_____(Please fill in directly)

6. Your organizational tenure in the current bank:

①Less than 1 year   ②1-3 years   ③3-5 years   ④5-10 years   ⑤Over 10 years

7. Your operating post:

①Operation support　②Marketing　③Business management　④Risk control ⑤Comprehensive management ⑥Information technology

8. Your work unit is the bank's:

①Branch　②Management headquarter

9. The number of people in the team(s) directly managed by your supervisor (including yourself)＿＿＿＿＿(Please fill in directly)

10. Your number of children:

①None　　②1　　③2　　④3 or more

11. Your education:

①High school or below　　②Junior college　　③College　　④Master or above

12. You are:

①Local　②Nonlocal

13. Your after-tax annual income:

①Below 80,000 yuan　②80,000-150,000 yuan　③150,000-250,000yuan　④Above 250,000 yuan

Thank you again for filling out this questionnaire!