

Chinese Students' Perception of President Xi Jinping in terms of Transformational Leadership

Asad Ullah, M. Ahsan Jamal, Greta Pesce, Yuan Yuan Mei

Abstract

The outline of this project begins with the exploration of basic idea of leadership and further linking it with Chinese political environment. Subsequently the transformational leadership model is used to analyze Chinese students' perception of President Xi Jinping, while the traits of followers — in this case Chinese students — are defined using Robert Kelly's followership model. The central piece of this research was to conduct survey among Chinese students, while the survey questionnaire was analytically designed to reveal the follower's level of agreement with Xi Jinping's policies as well as overall popularity. The survey data also helped indicate the types of followers and to examine relevant connections to their viewpoints, which aided in investigating their perception of Chinese president as a leader. This framework would conceivably be an effective attempt to indicate that how followers define themselves and how their standpoint conceives leadership. This study can not only help identify the popularity of Chinese leader among students but also evaluate the effects of policies introduced by Xi Jinping. Finally, a note of assessment is included to understand to what extent current policies meet students' expectations, which can predict the trend and help weigh future reforms, formulation of new policies and development of the governing system.

Introduction

The core incentive of this research is to explore the concept of leadership, especially transformational leadership and behaviors of followers in China. To begin with, the basic idea of leadership and personality traits are defined as well as explored in Chinese context, while connecting it with the traits of followers and their view of modern China's most powerful man Xi Jinping. To define and categorize the followers, this research uses Robert Kelly's model

of followership, which is most relevant and applicable for identifying the different types of followers – Chinese students, and how their perception of current Chinese President evolves according to their adherence to certain principles.

In different cultures, leadership is viewed in different ways, in some cultures, in order to be seen as a leader, one might need to take strong, decisive action, while in other cultures consultation and a democratic style may be the preferred approach to exercising effective leadership.

Traditionally, in some cases, Chinese leaders are expected to rank ethical considerations above the achievement of profit (Ahmed, Kung, & Eichenseher, 2003). While, in other situations leaders are considered as the role models of social order (Lee, 1987, p. 30). Under Confucian values effective leaders must take two roles, to maintain both order and harmony in the social structure because leadership is similar to the concept of headship, such as the head of a family or the head of a clan. As a result, leaders in these roles can expect respect, deference, and obedience from their followers without coercion (Littrell, 2007).

Nowadays, the notion of leadership in China is based on several factors, including past experiences, social-cultural values and philosophical ideas, therefore current Chinese political leadership also falls under certain criteria, and their actions as well as motives behind certain policies are deeply rooted in their own experiences and traditional values.

Since Xi Jinping became the supreme leader of the People's Republic of China, the world witnessed some changes in China's internal and foreign policy. Xi's move to clean up corruption within the party greatly bolstered public confidence and support for Xi, contributing to his image as a strong leader. At the

same time, China under Xi shows a more proactive strategy and initiated an official propaganda inviting other nations to use the “China Model” as a reference. This is evidence that Chinese foreign policy has become more outward looking. Simultaneously, Xi’s “proactive” foreign policy approach represents a remarkable departure from that of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, who was often seen as following a policy of “inaction” (Cheng Li, Eve Cary, 2011).

Xi’s administration has adopted a hardline approach towards the disputed territories. China under Xi has also been actively engaged in the construction of new global economic and financial institutions. Moreover, “One Belt, One Road” and “Asian Security Concept” initiatives are an extension of the “China model” and “Chinese values”.

Taking everything into account, Xi is considered as an ‘action-man’, and China under Xi does not wish to wait for favorable international conditions. The increase in China’s national capabilities implies that it is not necessary for China to act strictly in accordance with the existing international situation. Instead, China under Xi’s leadership now possesses the confidence to construct its own favorable international conditions to maximize benefits to itself.

Therefore, it is also interesting to explore how the locals in China view Xi Jinping, what are the opinions of Chinese people towards Xi being an ethical, innovative, committed, authoritative and respectable personality, as well as to examine how the masses can relate their interests with the policies introduced by their leader. To analyze these factors, set of questions are carefully designed and added to the survey questionnaire, which can not only help discover the attitudes of people but can also observe to what extent people view President Xi Jinping is a transformational leader.

In any society, students are considered as one of the core pillars, as they shape the ideas and are the driving force behind any movement in the social group, therefore it is important to evaluate the Chinese students’ perception of leadership in China and how they view the Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Review of Literature

Having defined the research objectives and questions of inquiry, this chapter will delve into a detailed discussion of literature on leadership with a special emphasis on the ‘Political Leadership’ and the idea of ‘Followership’ in politics. Since the main objective of this research is to find out the perception of leadership, a section is dedicated to discuss the literature on leadership perception and what are some of the factors which shape the perceptions of followers.

While much of the literature has focused on leadership in private sector management, an important question is to find out what are the traits of political leadership and what does theory, research and practice has to inform us about the ‘kind of leadership’ which exists in a country and the corresponding ‘followership’ which it entails.

Most of the research and scholarly work on leadership has ignored the followership aspect especially when it comes to political leadership; therefore it is pertinent to understand followership in order to understand the perception of leadership and the particular type of leadership people associate themselves with. There is not enough research when it comes to political leadership perception in China especially in the eyes of university students.

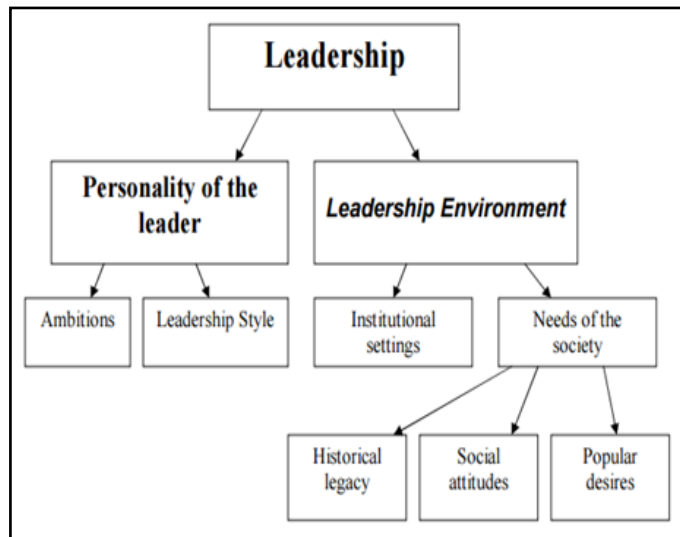
The current research focuses on students with the aim to understand how younger generation views leadership and what traits of Xi Jinping they associate the most with when it comes to forming their perceptions of him as the political leader of China and what kind of a follower they believe they are.

The chapter is sub-divided into following sections:

1. Theories of leadership & Political leadership
2. Perception of Political leadership
3. Leadership and followership
4. Personality traits, perception and followership of political leaders
5. Theories of Followership
6. Robert Kelley’s Model of Followership

Understanding Leadership and Political Leadership from a theoretical perspective

Leadership in the context of given study is assumed to mean political leadership. The biggest strength of this research is the lack of scholarly research on political leadership and followership. Based on discussions and reading of the idea of leadership, we have come up with the following model of leadership which will be used and understood interchangeably with political leadership throughout this paper



The above figure demonstrates the factors which determine leadership. The personality traits of a leader and how they are perceived by the public (followers) and the political, social and economic environment where this interplay takes place, determine the kind of leadership which exists in a group, organization or a society. The same holds true for political leadership. Most of the research on leadership in general and political leadership in particular has focused on either one of the two strands in the above model. Our review of the literature on leadership indicates that most studies have looked either at the personality traits or the environment in which leaders exercise their influence. There is a need to understand leadership based on both perception of the leaders and the kind of followership which follows.

In theory political leadership is best understood by James McGregor Burns (1978) whose distinction between transformational and transactional leadership in terms of personality traits of the leaders and their interaction with followers is central to this study. Burn's scientific study of leadership as a political phenomenon has become a currency in political leadership studies. Burns (1978) focuses

on the psychological and ethical dimensions of political leadership. Based on these dimensions he classifies leadership into two broad categories; transformational and transactional leadership. His focus is mainly on the relationship between leaders and their followers and a balance in this relationship (Burns, 2003). Transactional leadership is based on needs and is utilitarian in nature where leadership makes the provision of goods possible according to the bargain between followers and leaders.

On the other hand, transformational leadership has a moral component which demands a higher meaning or purpose. (Burns, 2003) defines transactional leadership as one, where 'one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things'. This is a kind of political leadership which is based on self-interest and basic needs, for example demand for votes. Transformational leadership is when leaders engage with followers in a way that they raise each other's moral ground and motivation (Burns, 2003). It is a type of political leadership that moves the society towards achieving higher long term collective goals with an understanding of the followers. According to (Burns, 2003), this is a kind of leadership which understands followers in such a way so as to define their values in a meaningful way so they could be moved towards a purposeful action. This typology of the concept of leadership has its basis purely in political science but has been borrowed by scholars working on leadership in management and other fields. Max Weber's idea of 'Charismatic Leadership' fits into this equation of transformational leadership and followership. He argues that, 'a charismatic leader is characterized by a strong personal appeal and determination, especially in crisis like situations and challenges. But for Weber (1946) if "leadership fails to benefit followers, it is likely that...charisma will disappear".

Much of the contemporary research on leadership has ignored the followership perspective. Our research aims to fill this gap by defining leadership perception in terms of followership as we shall explore later and provide a justification for. Similar views on charismatic leadership are shared by Willner (1984), Hollander and Offermann (1990) who studied charisma as a function of leader-followers bond. According to Willner (1984), it is not the leader or his qualities but the perception of leaders in the

eyes of people (followers) that counts in generating charismatic leadership.

Leadership as a function of followership in theory

Most of the scholarship on leadership has ignored the idea of followership as a means to measure and assess the type and perception of leadership respectively. The present section will review some of the major theoretical paradigms of leadership before introducing the literature on followership and how it defines leadership. The reader will have a clear idea of two concepts by the end of this discussion; furthermore, it will develop a base for the followership model we are using for the purposes of current research.

At the conceptual level, followership is described as a function of the follower, leader and situational variables (Thompson & Morris, 2006; Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008). It should be also noted that just like there is no universal definition of leaders, there is no succinct explanation of the idea of followership (Bass, 2008). Kelley (1992) has provided one of the most comprehensive models of followership and categorized followers based on the kind of engagement they have with leadership. Before exploring Kelley's model in detail, which also serves as a backbone to this research, it is important to explore research surrounding followership.

Chaleff's (2009) model suggests a characterization of followers according to follower support for the leader and the challenges they pose for the leader. Courageous followers actively participate in perceiving the leadership and associating themselves with them accordingly. This is closely in line with Kelley's (1992) model which divides followers into different categories. These followers know when to dissociate themselves from the leadership, especially when it becomes clear to them that the common goal is not being served (Dvir & Shamir, 2003).

Followers and followership are central to understand perception of leadership, after all the way followers identify themselves with a political leader in turn shows their perception of that leader whether it's due to the personality traits, charisma, policies, authority or popularity of that leader. While some theories of leadership do not accommodate followership in explaining leadership others do so cursorily, while yet others give more importance to it. By looking at the current scholarship we can classify leadership

theories according to the degree of their emphasis on followers and followership.

a. Personality Traits Approach

Leader is at the heart of this approach. It takes into account the personal characteristics of a leader, for example; personality, motivation, physical appearance and intellect which enable individuals for leadership roles. (Kenny & Zaccaro, 1983; Harder, 2003) In the tradition of leadership research, traits approach hasn't paid much attention to followers and followership in understanding leadership. The basic assumption of this theory is that the success or failure of a leader is independent of followers and followership.

b. Transformational and Charismatic Leadership theories

The behavior of leaders is the main focus of these theories. Though they credit leaders for the success or failure of a group, these theories do not completely discredit the role played by followers. As discussed above, transformational leadership is the one which bring about positive changes in a group, organization or at the societal level. Burns (2003) argues that this process transforms followers into leaders, where both become effective and ethical. Charismatic leadership on the other hand sees leaders as yielding extraordinary powers of influence over followers, capacity to exert influence over followers through emotional attachment (Weber, 1947). An important aspect here is the followers' perception which is the key to maintaining the status of being a charismatic leader. Conger & Kanungo (1987) are of the view that to maintain this image, leaders must take risks, demonstrate their personal commitment and appear confident and knowledgeable.

c. Contingency Models

Contingency models rest on the assumption that leaders' effectiveness is contingent upon the situational elements, which includes followers too. There are two main theories towards that end. The Path-Goal Theory states that the leaders influence the perception of followers in terms of desirability of following a certain path to achieve a certain goal (House & Mitchell, 1974). If the followers are convinced that by completing a certain task they can achieve a desired objective, they will stay motivated. In a way this is how the followers perceive leadership, motivational or not. The style of leadership in this context (directive, supportive, participative or achievement oriented) is

determined by (me) followers' nature (needs, values, abilities and personalities) and (ii) nature of the task to be completed. Situational leadership theory posits that the most effective leadership style is a factor of level of readiness of followers, where readiness level is gauged by the ability and willingness of the followers to achieve a given task (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2008).

d. Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

LMX is a kind of parameter which measures the relationships between leaders and followers based on various variables (Goertzen & Fritz, 2004). In a high LMX (high quality relationship) there are high levels of trust, support and mutual influence between the followers and leaders, hence followers are more committed, productive and satisfied as compared to those with low LMX. (Grestner & Day, 1997)

e. Information Processing Theory

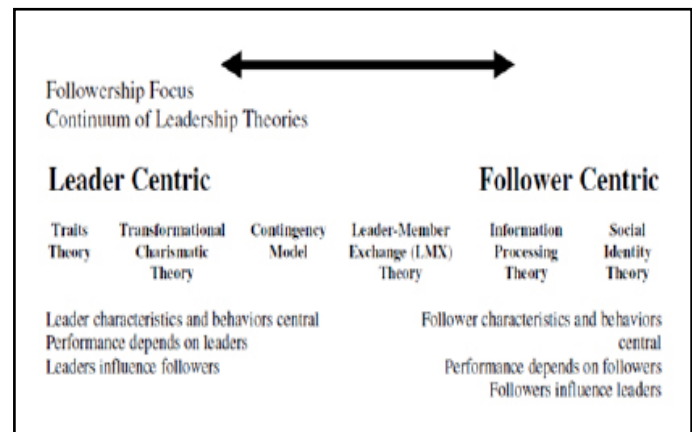
This theory examines the cognitive processes behind the behavior of leaders and followers. The followers make a sense of the world around them created by leaders (Brown, Scott & Lewis, 2004). Leaders make sense of the cognitive world to see what kind of behavior they should use while the followers judge the effectiveness of leadership based on the information which tells them whether leader is responsible for higher performance or not (Lord & Maher, 1991). This is particular relevant for the current research where economic performance of leaders is one of the main elements which help people make perception of leadership in China.

f. Social Identity Theory

This is the only theoretical framework in the context of given research which lays complete focus on the followers in defining and assessing leadership (Lord & Brown, 2004). Van Knippenberg & Hogg (2004) explain how the effectiveness of leadership depends on leaders' processing of followers' self-image.

Successful leaders tend to modify their messages and persona with the changing social identity of followers. Some followers are more self-centered, while others associate emotionally with the leaders. Lord & Brown (2004) have shown in their research that most effective leaders tend to shift the focus of their followers from more individualist concerns to collective goals and aspirations.

The purpose of exploring these theoretical frameworks was to understand the levels at which leaders and followers interact and perceive each other. A survey of these theories will help readers understand the rationale of the current research which combines perception of leaders with the relative followership using Kelly's (1992) followership model. Here is a graphical representation of above theories to understand their relative focus on followers.



Personality Traits and Perception of Leadership

Most of the research on personality traits of political leaders hold true for democratic societies with electoral processes. Since the present study deals with China, which has an authoritarian regime with elements of democracy at the very lowest levels of governance we are assuming that most of the personality traits discussed here will serve as a general guideline for this study too. It will be interesting to discuss what the current and past research has to say about the role which personality traits of political leaders play in shaping the public perception of leadership styles and the corresponding followership which followers associate themselves with.

Personal Appeal has appeared time and again as one of the most important determining factor for the public perception of leadership style. From Weberian notion of Charismatic leadership to an investigation into the role played by appearance and visual imagery of the leaders have been discussed and concluded by researchers to influence their image building or personal appeal among the followers (Little et al, 2007 ; Lawson, 2010; Brusattin, 2012). Others have mentioned communication-style or emotional expression to hold equal water in determining the

public perception of leaders (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Bystron et al, 2004; Stroud et al, 2005). Image-making and political branding also makes up the synthesis of much of the research in the field (Newman, 1999; Grabe, Bucy, 2009; Spiller & Bergner, 2011). But the question remains can we really generalize these research outcomes for any case? Which aspects of personality matters the most to the followers in deciding what attributes to attach to a political leader and kind of followership they assume? These questions will be answered by this research in the context of Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping.

Dinas (2008), Caliendo (2011) & Jones et al. (2013) have concluded that from the view point of political science, the notion of appeal could be attributed to the realm of electoral processes and strategic communication techniques used by political leaders. The concept of “appeal” as defined by Merriam-Webster Thesaurus refers to the power of irresistible attraction, magnetism, captivation and enchantment (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

The biggest gap in the literature when it comes to assessing the perception of followers on the basis of personality traits of political leaders is that they haven't defined and properly calculated those feelings. Even a specialized tool called ‘Feeling thermometer’ (Nelson, 2008); a survey tool popular among researchers to under the politicians public perception is not equipped enough to explain these feelings. Partisanship, ideology and social class have been the most widely used parameters in political science to gauge the personal appeal of politician and leaders. Hecker (2004) asserts that “the image of a candidate is essentially in the eyes of the beholder” and thus perception is driven by followers not leaders. What really matters is how the imagery and persona of a leader is perceived by the followers (Garzia, 2011).

The problem with literature on personality traits of leaders is that there is a lack of consensus over which qualities or attributes are processed by followers in shaping their perception of the leaders. One set of scholars has put too much emphasis on the following traits of leaders when it comes to political leadership and building public perception (Funk, 1996; Miller et al, 1986; Shanks, 1996; Hayes, 2005).

- a. Integrity
- b. Reliability
- c. Intelligence
- d. Leadership ability
- e. Empathy

Yet others have adopted a more comprehensive approach by using the “big five”, which is a five-dimensional personality model (Gerber, 2011, John & Srivastava, 1999). In the Big Five Theory, following personality traits are defined as the most effective in shaping public perception of the political leaders:

- a. Extraversion
- b. Agreeableness
- c. Conscientiousness
- d. Emotional stability
- e. Openness to experience

These parameters capture the five major dimensions of human personality (John et al, 2008) Mondak (2010) who used this approach in his analysis of personality traits of political leaders is of the view that the Big Five Approach is an all-encompassing measure to aggregate the most essential traits of the political leaders which are processed by followers in the context of defining leadership styles. Among other advantages of this approach include its multi-disciplinary nature where it is being employed by political psychology (Caprara et al, 2002). One question comes to mind of a researcher here, how would charisma fit into this equation? There is a growing consent among scholars that charisma is not particularly a trait of leaders' personalities, but it has more to do with the relationship between leaders and followers (Shamir et al, 1993; Howel & Shamir, 2005). However in the research, the interaction between the five big traits and charisma is missing somehow. The current research will try to narrow this gap by assessing the perception of followers in terms of not only personality traits but also charisma. This brings us to the discussion of the concept of followership in literature and finally the model for current research which works in an opposite direction – defining transformational/charismatic leadership in terms of followership. It is highly misleading to put a tag of transformational, transactional or charismatic leadership without first identifying the type of followership which exists in a society (Chinese students for the purposes of our research).

Followership

The maxim, "Always be a leader, never a follower!" is a thing of past and might sound true for bureaucratic and private organizations, but when we talk about politics, ground realities are different. Political leaders exist because there is an active followership, from which they drive legitimate authority and exercise influence and steer policies. Brown (2003) has observed that leaders in their respective organizations and fields (which also include politics) are no longer the only source of important information about functions and therefore can't expect to be followed blindly by their followers. The same is true for political leaders, even in a tightly controlled country like China where leaders feel pressured to be accountable to their followers and need to maintain an active followership for their policies and agendas to become a reality.

Therefore it's very important to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of followership in the context of leadership and perception of followers. The literature in followership can be roughly divided into three broad themes:

- a. Follower motivations
- b. Follower values and trusts
- c. Characteristics of active and inactive followers

Followers' motivation

According to Hughes (1998), most followers don't need leader to motivate them, but they motivate themselves. Motivation of followers depends on the relationship between the follower and the leader and how the personal traits (values) on two sides match up. Scholars have concluded that in case there is a similarity in the value systems of leadership and followers, the need to motivate followers might not be as high since the followers are already drive by the bond which exists between them (Mumford, Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000).

Research on Charismatic leadership have confirmed this point of view, suggesting that followers' self-concepts may also play a role in determining their motivations to follow certain leaders (Howell & Shamir, 2005). Green (2000) has outlined three conditions that must exist for the followers to stay highly motivated. First is the 'confidence' that they can do the job which is required of them. Second is the 'trust' in their leader to peg outcomes to their performance. Lastly, need to be 'satisfied' by the

outcome they get.

Follower Values

Values are very important to determine the preferences of followers for the different types of leaderships. Referring to our initial model of leadership environment, followers' values in addition to their personal traits can have an influence on not only their own effectiveness but also the climate in which they interact with the leadership (Hanges, Offerman, & Day, 2001). There is no debate on the fact that followers and leaders work better when their values match. Gardner et al (2005) is of the view that when leaders model their values, identity, emotions and goals effectively, there are more chances of an authentic followership.

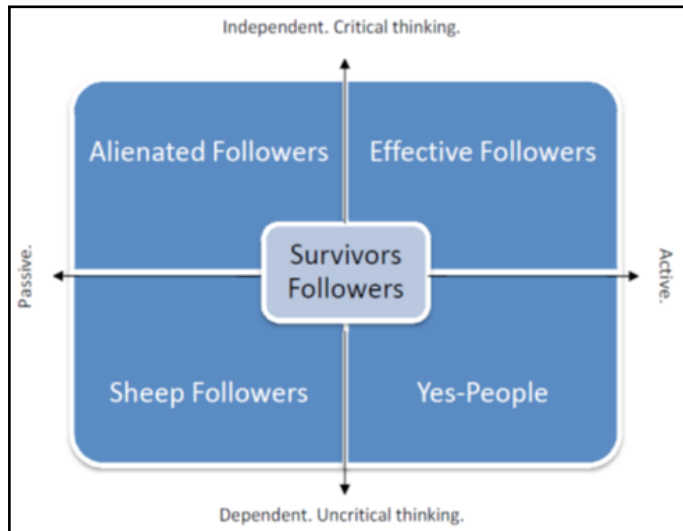
Research by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) examined the relationship between leaders and followers to determine how values and personality influence this relationship. One of the most important finding of their research was that those followers who identified themselves as risk-takers and result-oriented preferred Charismatic leadership. The same could be held true for followers who indicated their interest in decision making.

Active and Inactive followers

A few scholars have looked into the characteristics of followers in order to distinguish between good, bad and the ugly. The most groundbreaking and influential research to date is the one carried out by Kelley (1988, 1992). Before discussion the Kelley's Model of followership, it is important to understand what other researchers have to say about the characteristics of followers and how it influences their perception of leadership and the style of leadership they correspond to.

Masciulli, Molchanov and Knight (2009) are of the view that it is the followers who create leaders. Leadership according to Smirich and Morgan (1982) is a socially constructed phenomenon. They argue that it is a product of interaction being the leaders and those led, in a political leadership environment. Considered that way, leadership is the ability to change the social reality of those led (followers). The followers in that sense have the responsibility to the reception of leader's direction and her reality. This process of interaction forces followers to surrender to the directions of the leader and shape their reality

according to the world created by leaders, especially political leaders. This acceptance is thus crucial for the success of organizations and political systems. It is for this reason that the current scholarship is focusing more on followership patterns to understand leadership than on leadership itself.



Model based on Robert Kelley (1988)'s categorization of followers under a leadership

Robert Kelley's Model

Robert Kelley (1988) was one of first researchers to hint upon the importance of followers in understanding leadership styles and perception. Before Kelley, most of the scholarship on leadership had ignored follower as active stakeholders in leadership studies. Kelley has created a scheme which distinguishes followers into five categories. He justifies on the basis that different followers can have different roles under leadership. These types are:

a. Sheep Followers:

Sheep followers never complain or criticize negatively about leaders and their decisions. They just obey the orders and do the tasks assigned to them. No questions asked. Due to this absolute obedience, they never tend to take responsibilities or initiatives. In the context of political systems, those people who never participate in government policy making or show indifference to the political decisions of the leaders, fall into this category. (Kelley, 1988)

b. Yes followers

Just as sheep people do not take initiatives, so do Yes-people. However, what distinguishes them is their

complete acceptance of leaders and their decisions. They tend to consider leaders as a 'Source of inspiration (inspirational-motivational perspective)'. They are the ones who reassure leaders in practice of their leadership and the decisions they take.

In political systems, people who vote for the same political party or affiliate themselves with same leaders could be considered as yes-people. Speaking of China, people who affiliate themselves with the leadership of Xi Jinping and his decisions to reform economy and society without questioning could be put under this category. Yes-people believe that leaders are leaders because they are the most able people to govern.

c. Alienated followers

According to Robert Kelley, alienated followers tend to be independent thinkers and do not shy-away from criticizing the leaders and their decision-making. But despite their disagreements and frustrations, they do not make an effort to change the system. Some non-voters and people who are not active on the political scene could be regarded as alienated followers.

d. Survivor Followers

Those people who exists within an organization but tend to look for safety nets for the sake of their survival. Their position towards following leadership is oriented towards securing their social, political or economic position intact. They are very adaptable to changes, just to make sure their position is not jeopardized.

e. Effective Followers

They are essential to exist for the successful functioning of an organization or a political system. Robert Kelley (1988) thus defines them as enthusiastic, intelligent and self-reliant. In the context of political systems, these are the people who actively participate in political activism and show their interest in political decisions taken by leadership. In order to respect their own value-systems, they would stand-up to oppose the leaders.

This could be depicted in the graphical form as follows to serve as a model to understand followership and will be used for the purpose of the current study which will see what kind of followership exist among Chinese university students and what kind of traits they attribute to the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

Methodology

i. Rationale and Theoretical Framework

Based on Robert Kelley (1988)'s theory of followership, the basic assumption of this research is that leadership exists because there is followership. Kelley and many other researchers on political leadership have put a special emphasis on the ideas of followership, the qualities, characteristics and corresponding types of followers. For this purpose the research will assess how followers (Chinese students) perceive leadership (Chinese President Xi Jinping). Kelly has defined different categories of followers based on motivation, inspiration, charisma and engagement with leadership. Based on this relationship, he puts followers into following categories: 1. Sheep-followers, 2. Yes-people, 3. Alienated followers, 4. Effective followers

ii. Research design

The research surveyed 269 Chinese students from more than 50 cities to understand Chinese students' perception of leadership and current President Xi Jinping. The most part of survey was conducted using social networking app "WeChat", while the link was also shared on local portals to reach wide range of respondents in different Chinese cities. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese in order to provide better understanding to the respondents. In order to improve the accuracy of data and acquire honest and candid responses, the respondents were not asked to provide their names or affiliation with institution. Despite initial hurdles and some students complaining the questions to be sensitive, the overall response rate was good and finally after a struggling one month, required number of respondents successfully submitted their response.

The respondents included 141 males (52.41%) and 128 females (47.59%). The survey contains information such as age, gender, and education level. Variable "age" is an open question however the data which is over 30 and under 18 has been excluded so as to prevent from bias; variable "gender" would become a dummy variable and we take 1 as male and 0 as female; variable "education level" has been divided into 5 levels: college, bachelor, master, and Ph.D.

Beside personal information, the survey contains two parts, including (1) Political followership and

(2) Perception of Xi Jinping, all of the questions are 5-points scale questions, where students have to indicate their degree of agreement with the statements, as of (1)extremely disagree to (5)extremely agree. From the first part we could determine the identity of our questionnaire subjects; furthermore, according to the first part, we could divide them into four types of follower (Sheep-Followers, Yes-People, Alienated Followers, and Effective Followers) in terms of leadership based on Robert Kelley's (1988) theory of followership. In the second part of the survey, we demonstrate Chinese students' perception of Xi Jinping, including different aspects such as whether he is admirable, respectable, or ethical.

iii. Measures

This research is using multi-regression to test the relation between followership and perception of leader. To sum up, we can describe the model by the following formula: leadership = f (followership). In the research, we use the questions of the second part (perception of Xi Jinping) as the independent variable, and the question of first part (followership) as dependent variable, to demonstrate each type of follower is related to what kind of perception of Chinese President Xi. Moreover, the research also used the regression between personal information and perception of Xi Jinping in order to understand the perceptions of different ages, gender, and education level.

Research Results

1. Overview

According to the data summary, the average age of our questionnaire subjects is 22.85, and the education level is between college and PhD level. Most of the respondent's education level is Bachelors (45.72%) and Masters (38.28%), whereas PhD and College students accounted for 9.29% and 7.06% respectively. For all the questions, the average score is between 2.23 to 3.86, which means people choose disagree and agree in general. The lowest average score (2.23) is the question of "How frequently do you report your problems to the concerned authorities to change the way things are?", and the highest average score (3.86) is the question of "Xi Jinping personality is respectable." On the other hand, the question of"

Xi Jinping is admirable.” has the highest standard deviation (1.445), which means people are more tend to choose extreme answer, strongly disagree and strongly agree, compare to other questions; the question of “How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?” has the lowest standard deviation (0.847), which means people tend to choose the average score (2.76).

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
age	253	22.85375	3.415411	17	37
male	271	.5202952	.5005122	0	1
edu	271	2.498155	.7595054	1	4
interested-c	271	3.107011	.9267559	1	5
family_eff-t	271	2.756458	.8474935	1	5
critisized~i	271	2.538745	1.332421	1	5
agree_xi	271	3.162362	1.086715	1	5
wrong	271	2.405904	1.340744	1	5
change_sit-n	271	3.210332	1.2867	1	5
report_sit-n	271	2.232472	1.152058	1	5
care_future	271	3.789668	1.048828	1	5
ethical_xi	271	3.771218	1.2792	1	5
trust_xi	271	3.804428	1.274587	1	5
respectable	271	3.863469	1.250109	1	5
admirable	271	3.247232	1.445857	1	5
motivates~e	271	3.678967	1.298247	1	5
inspire_ch-a	271	3.697417	1.3126	1	5
commitment	271	3.579336	1.333395	1	5
xi_is_auth-y	271	3.405904	1.368089	1	5
innovative	271	3.560886	1.289194	1	5
xi_is_open	271	3.501845	1.376723	1	5
critical_h-s	271	3.704797	1.164894	1	5

2. Effective Followers

The research use the questions of “Have you ever found that Xi Jinping is wrong?” and “How concerned do you feel about China's Future?” to recognize ‘Effective followers’. According to the result, the variables “Xi Jinping motivates Chinese People” and “Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems” are significantly related respondents who are effective followers. The coefficient of “Xi Jinping motivates Chinese People.” is -0.38, which means the more people think Xi motivates Chinese people, the less they are an effective followers. Moreover, the coefficient of “Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems,” is -0.44, which means the more people think President Xi is open to new idea, the less likely they are an effective followers.

```
. reg effective_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people
inspire_china commitment xi_i > s_authority innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 271		
Model	239.845136	11	21.8041033	F(11, 259) = 10.03		
Residual	562.78955	259	2.17293263	Prob > F = 0.0000		
Total	802.634686	270	2.97272106	R-squared = 0.2988		
				Adj R-squared = 0.2690		
				Root MSE = 1.4741		

effective_~s	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ethical_xi	.2676221	.1642231	1.63	0.104	-.0557603	.5910045
trust_xi	-.1645708	.1953573	-0.84	0.400	-.5492617	.22012
respectable	-.1841308	.1951227	-0.94	0.346	-.5683596	.200098
admirable	-.0786411	.1293824	-0.61	0.544	-.3334164	.1761342
motivates~e	-.3866357	.1977263	-1.96	0.052	-.7759915	.0027201
inspire_ch-a	.2195562	.2098517	1.05	0.296	-.1936765	.6327889
commitment	.0410555	.1960723	0.21	0.834	-.3450432	.4271543
xi_is_auth-y	-.1190213	.1189098	-1.00	0.318	-.3531743	.1151318
innovative	.1677496	.1824921	0.92	0.359	-.1916076	.5271068
xi_is_open	-.4414075	.1693111	-2.61	0.010	-.774809	-.108006
critical_h-s	-.0455583	.106978	-0.43	0.671	-.2562157	.165099
_cons	8.765398	.3395602	25.81	0.000	8.096748	9.434049

3. Yes-People

The research used the questions of “How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?”, “Do you agree with all the decisions of Xi Jinping?”, and “How frequently have you taken any initiative to change the way things are?” to identify ‘Yes-People’. According to the regression result, the independent variable “Xi Jinping demonstrates commitment to goals of Chinese people” significantly positive related to Yes-people. The coefficient is 0.68, which means Yes-people believe that “Xi Jinping demonstrate commitment to goals of Chinese people.”

```
. reg yes_people ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people inspire_china
commitment xi_is_authori > ty innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 271		
Model	158.274749	11	14.3886135	F(11, 259) = 4.06		
Residual	918.204956	259	3.54519288	Prob > F = 0.0000		
Total	1076.4797	270	3.98696187	R-squared = 0.1470		
				Adj R-squared = 0.1108		
				Root MSE = 1.8829		

yes_people	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ethical_xi	-.1931415	.209764	-0.92	0.358	-.6062015	.2199185
trust_xi	-.0049193	.2495321	-0.02	0.984	-.4962893	.4864507
respectable	-.1169512	.2492324	-0.47	0.639	-.6077311	.3738286
admirable	-.0314953	.1652616	-0.19	0.849	-.3569227	.2939321
motivates~e	.2283435	.252558	0.90	0.367	-.2689851	.725672
inspire_ch-a	.1114818	.2680459	0.42	0.678	-.416345	.6393087
commitment	.6845136	.2504454	2.73	0.007	.1913452	1.177682
xi_is_auth-y	-.2704183	.1518848	-1.78	0.076	-.5695047	.028668
innovative	-.154235	.2330993	-0.66	0.509	-.6132461	.3047761
xi_is_open	-.202991	.2162629	-0.94	0.349	-.7228665	.6288485
critical_h-s	-.0271249	.1366442	-0.20	0.843	-.2962	.2419502
_cons	7.587869	.4337241	17.49	0.000	6.733795	8.441944

4. Alienated Followers

The research use the questions of “How frequently do you report your problems to the concerned authorities to change the way things are?” and “How frequently have you criticized Xi Jinping’s decisions either publicly or privately?” to identified alienated followers, since alienated followers are more critical and disgruntle. According to the regression result, under $\alpha=0.1$ level, independent variables “Xi Jinping can be trusted for the progress of China”, and “Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.” are significantly related to alienated followers. Both of the coefficients of variables are negatives, which means alienated followers are tend to think Xi Jinping cannot be trusted for the progress of China, and Xi Jinping is not open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.

```
. reg Alienated_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people inspire_china commitment xi_is_au > s.authority innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 271		
Model	224.392718	11	20.399338	F(11, 259) =	7.41	
Residual	713.42278	259	2.75452811	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	937.815498	270	3.47339073	R-squared =	0.2393	
				Adj R-squared =	0.2070	
				Root MSE =	1.6597	

Alienated_s	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ethical_xi	-.1440685	.184899	-0.78	0.437	-.5081653	.2200283
trust_xi	-.3905294	.2199531	-1.78	0.077	-.8236535	.0425946
respectable	-.1836601	.2196889	-0.84	0.404	-.616264	.2489438
admirable	-.1174223	.1456718	-0.81	0.421	-.4042743	.1694296
motivates_e	-.3138759	.2226203	-1.41	0.160	-.7522522	.1245004
inspire_ch-a	.269356	.2362723	1.14	0.255	-.1959033	.7346154
commitment	.1949986	.2207581	0.88	0.378	-.2397107	.6297079
xi_is_auth-y	-.0647094	.1338807	-0.48	0.629	-.3283427	.1989239
innovative	.2856073	.2054682	1.39	0.166	-.1189936	.6902082
xi_is_open	-.3181751	.1906276	-1.67	0.096	-.6935524	.0572022
critical_h-s	.147209	.1204467	1.22	0.223	-.0899705	.3843885
_cons	7.124186	.3823114	18.63	0.000	6.371352	7.877021

5. Sheep Followers

Sheep followers are likened to sheep who do only what they are told and no more; therefore, the research use questions of “How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?”, “How frequently have you criticized Xi Jinping’s decisions either publicly or privately?” and “How frequently have you taken any initiative to change the way things are?” to identified sheep followers.

According to the research result, under $\alpha=0.1$ level, independent variables “Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.” is significantly related to sheep followers, and the coefficient is 0.371. In other words, sheep followers

are tend to think Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.

```
. reg Sheep_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people inspire_china commitment xi_is_au > thory innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 271		
Model	451.186114	11	41.0169195	F(11, 259) =	14.23	
Residual	746.799126	259	2.88339431	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	1197.98524	270	4.43698237	R-squared =	0.3766	
				Adj R-squared =	0.3501	
				Root MSE =	1.6981	

Sheep_foll-s	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ethical_xi	.0413901	.1891747	0.22	0.827	-.3311262	.4139064
trust_xi	.33614	.2250394	1.49	0.136	-.1069998	.7792798
respectable	.2618124	.2247691	1.16	0.245	-.1807952	.7044199
admirable	.1338993	.1490404	0.90	0.370	-.1595859	.4273845
motivates_e	.0607691	.2277683	0.27	0.790	-.3877444	.5092826
inspire_ch-a	-.1937799	.241736	-0.80	0.424	-.6697981	.2822383
commitment	-.0390129	.225863	-0.17	0.863	-.4837746	.4057487
xi_is_auth-y	.0766411	.1369766	0.56	0.576	-.1930885	.3463708
innovative	.0766043	.2102195	0.36	0.716	-.3373527	.4905613
xi_is_open	.3714188	.1950357	1.90	0.058	-.0126389	.7554764
critical_h-s	-.1303717	.1232319	-1.06	0.291	-.3730358	.1122924
_cons	-6.592742	.3911521	-16.85	0.000	-7.362985	-5.822498

6. Regression of four followers base on basic information

According to the regression result, the younger questionnaire subjects are more likely to be effective followers and alienated followers, especially effective followers since it is significant at $\alpha=0.05$ level. Moreover, male are more likely to be effective followers and alienated followers; whereas female are more likely are to be yes-people and sheep followers. Finally, lower educated people are more likely to be alienated followers in terms of leadership.

Coefficient of Independent Variables

Dependent variable	age	male	education
Effective followers	-0.1078**	0.9763**	0.139
Yes people	0.0522	-0.6054**	0.3269*
Alienated_followers	-0.0255	1.0622**	-0.7996
Sheep_followers	0.0616	-1.0957**	0.3246*

*=significant at $\alpha=0.1$ level

**=significant at $\alpha=0.05$ level

Conclusion

The result findings suggest most Chinese students are satisfied with President Xi Jinping's overall performance as a leader, and rather contended with his policies. Despite the fact that some respondents were reluctant to fill out survey as they considered the questions to be quite sensitive, most Chinese student's showed interest in the survey and eagerly participated.

The results of the survey indicated that most of the students, around fifty-percent, showed interest in politics, while nineteen percent answered that they are very interested in politics of China. Around 49% of the respondents believed that they have been somewhat influenced by their friends and family members in shaping their perception about Xi Jinping. While 30% of the students claimed to have been independent thinker and not been influenced by others. However, it doesn't indicate that they often criticize Xi Jinping, as most respondents, 32% 'rarely' and 25% 'never' publicly or privately criticized Xi's decisions. Furthermore most of the Chinese students seem to agree with Xi Jinping's policies and 32% of them 'never' and 29% 'rarely' found that Xi Jinping is wrong. Consequently, most of them 'never' or 'rarely' took any initiative to report their problems to the concerned authorities or take any action to change the way things are, which suggests that most fall under the criteria of sheep-followers or yes-people. However, there is positive indication that most of the students 45% very concerned and 26% extremely concerned about the future of China, which shows that there is a constructive trend among students to positively engage in politics.

Furthermore, the study reveals that most students believe that Xi Jinping is trustworthy, ethical and respectable leader, as well as rather critical regarding mistakes of his administrative officers in public, which clearly indicates that most respondents acknowledge and praise Xi's anti-corruption policies and 76% of the students consider Xi's as an ethical leader, while 77% of them believe that Xi Jinping can be trusted for the progress of China.

It is important to point out that most students can associate their interests with the interests and policies of their leader, as 73.8% of the respondents believe

that Xi Jinping demonstrates commitment to goals of Chinese people. Moreover, 74% of the surveyed students believe that Xi inspire enthusiasm for the progress of China and at the same time motivates Chinese people, whereas 72% of the respondents consider Xi's policies to be innovative.

The results reveal that most of the respondents consider President Xi Jinping to be a transformational leader, with bold, charismatic and trustworthy personality traits. This indicates that Chinese president is effectively using policy tools and being a leader of world's largest population, enjoys the support of majority of his young followers. Under Xi's leadership China is emerging as a new political and economic power, while maintaining the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, and honesty under the banner of "Socialism core value". In the eyes of Chinese students, Xi Jinping not only remains committed to the development of country but also adhere to legitimacy and longevity.

Xi's governance is not only abiding the rule of law to meet China's current needs, but also sustaining the country's overall development and delivering improved living conditions to the ordinary citizens, which legitimize his position as a transformational leader and increasing support from his followers.

References

- Ahmed, M. M., Kung, Y. C., & Eichenseher, J. W. (2003). Business students' perception of ethics and moral judgment: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43(1/2), 89-102.
- Bjugstad, K., Thach, E. C., Thompson, K. J., & Morris, A. (2006). A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles. *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 7(3), 304-319.
- Bass, B. (2008). *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research & Managerial Applications* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Burns, James M. (1978) *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Brown, D. J., Scott, K. A., & Lewis, H. (2004).

- Information processing and leadership. In J. Antonakis, A. T. Cianciolo, & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The nature of leadership* (pp. 125-147). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Brown, A. (2003). The new followership: A challenge for leaders. *Futurist*, 37, 68.
- Burns, J. M. (2003). *Transforming leadership: A new pursuit of happiness*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Cheng Li, Eve Cary (2011). "The Last Year of Hu's Leadership: Hu's to Blame?" *China Brief Volume: 11 Issue: 23*
- Chaleff, I. (2009). *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up To & For Our Leaders* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Caprara, G.V. and Zimbardo, P.G., 2004. Personalizing Politics: a Congruency Model of Political Preference. *American Psychologist*, 59(7), pp. 581-594
- Chaleff, I. (2003). *The courageous follower* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1987). Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, 637-647.
- Caprara, G.V. et al., 1999. Personality Profiles and Political Parties. *Political psychology*, 20, pp. 175-197.
- Caprara, G.V. et al., 2002, When Parsimony Subdues Distinctiveness: Simplified Public Perceptions of Politicians' Personality. *Political Psychology*, 23, pp.77-95
- Caprara, G.V. et al., 2002. When Parsimony Subdues Distinctiveness: Simplified Public Perceptions of Politicians' Personality. *Political Psychology*, 23, pp.77-95.
- Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. V. (1997). Meta-analytic review of leader-member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82, 827-844.
- Goertzen, B., & Fritz, S. M. (2004). Does sex of dyad members really matter? A review of leader-member exchange. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 3(2), 3-18.
- Green, T. (2000). *Motivation management*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.
- Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J., Luthans, F., May, D.R., Walumbwa, F. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 343-372.
- Gerber, A. S. et al., 2011. The Big Five Personality Traits in the Political Arena. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14, pp. 265-287.
- Garzia, D., 2011. The Personalization of Politics in Western Democracies: Causes and Consequences on Leader-Follower Relationships. *Leadership quarterly*, 22, pp. 697-709.
- Howell, J.M., & Shamir, B. (2005). The role of followers in the charismatic leadership process: Relationships and their consequences. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 96-112
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*. Basic Civitas Books
- Hershey, P., Blanchard, K. H., & Johnson, D. (2008). *Management of organizational behavior: Leading human resources* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hughes, M.L. (1998). *Keeping your job while your bosses are losing theirs*. Binghamton, NY: William Neil Publishing.
- Hanges, P., Offerman, L., & Day, D. (2001). Leaders, followers and values: Progress and prospects for theory and research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 12, 129-131.
- Johnson, C. E. (2009). *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or Shadow* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- John, O.P., et al., 2008. *Paradigm Shift to the Integrative*

- Big Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Conceptual Issues. In: O.P. John, R.W. Robins and L.A. Pervin, eds. 2008. *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*. 3rd ed. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 114–158.
- Kelley, R. (1988). In Praise of Followers. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 142-148.
- Lee, S. K. (1987). A Chinese conception of 'management': An interpretive approach. Doctoral dissertation, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Littrell, R.F. (2007). Influences on employee preferences for empowerment practices by the "ideal manager" in China, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 31, 87-110.
- Mumford, M.D., Dansereau, F., & Yammarino, F.J. (2000). Followers, motivations and levels of analysis: The case of individualized leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11, 313-340.
- Mondak, J.J., 2010. *Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, Sh.C., 2008. Feeling Thermometer. In: P.J. Lavrakas, ed. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Survey Research*
- Newman, B., 1999. *The Mass Marketing of Politics: Democracy in an Age of Manufactured Images*. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications.
- Shamir, B., 1994. Ideological Position, Leaders' Charisma, and Voting Preferences: Personal vs. Partisan Elections. *Political Behavior*, 16(2), pp. 265–287.
- Shamir, B. et al., 1993. The Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-concept Based Theory. *Organization Science*, 4, pp. 577–594.
- Shaw, D.R., 1999. The Effect of TV Ads and Candidate Appearances on Statewide Presidential Votes, 1988-96. *The American Political Science Review*, 93(2), pp. 345–361.
- Smircich, L., & Morgan, G. (1982), Leadership: The Management of Meaning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 18 N° 3, pp. 257-273.

Title: Chinese Students' Perception of President Xi Jinping in terms of Transformational Leadership

Authors: Asad Ullah, M. Ahsan Jamal, Greta Pesce, Yuan Yuan Mei