

**A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *GUANXI* AND *SIFARISH* AS
INFORMAL SOCIAL NETWORKS IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**



AMINA MUNIR

MS HRM 2K16

A thesis submitted to NUST Business School for the degree of Master of Science in Human
Resource Management

2020

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2020

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.0 Background	1
1.2 Significance of the study	3
1.2 Research objectives and Research Questions	5
1.3 Organization of the thesis	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
2.0 Introduction.....	7
2.1 Theories related to Social Networks	8
2.1.1 Social Networks Theory.....	8
2.1.2 Other theories related to Social Networks	9
2.2 Informal Social Networks	10
2.2.1 Antecedents of informal social networks.....	11
2.2.2 <i>Guanxi</i> and <i>Sifarish</i> in cultural context.....	11
2.2.3 Perceptions of Chinese managers about use of <i>guanxi</i>	14
2.2.4 Perceptions of managers about use of <i>sifarish</i>	15
2.3 Recruitment and Selection	16
2.3.1 Recruitment and selection policies and practices.....	16
2.4 Culture, Cross-culture studies and GLOBE Study.....	17
2.4.1 Culture.....	17
2.4.2 Cross-culture studies	18
2.4.3 Comparison of GLOBE study and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions.....	18
2.4.3 GLOBE Study’s nine dimensions of culture.....	19
2.6 Conclusion	23
Chapter 3: Research Methods	23
3.0 Introduction.....	23
3.1 Purpose of the study and research questions.....	24
3.2 Rationale of study design strategy	25
3.3 Philosophical and theoretical orientation.....	26
3.3.1 Epistemology	27
3.3.2 Ontology	29
3.4 Data collection process	29
3.4.1 Level of data collection.....	30

3.4.2 The interview process -- selecting and accessing participants	32
3.5 Data Analysis and limitations of the study	37
3.5.1 Data Analysis	37
3.5.2 Limitations	39
3.6 Ethical issues, values and practical considerations	40
3.7 Measures of qualitative research.....	41
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	43
4.0 Introduction.....	43
4.1 Summary and key findings of the study.....	43
4.2 Informal Social Networks	45
4.2.1 <i>Guanxi</i>	46
4.2.2 <i>Sifarish</i>	48
4.2.3 Managerial perspective towards use of informal social networks (<i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i>) in recruitment and selection	50
4.3 Recruitment and Selection	51
4.3.1 Recruitment and Selection policies.....	52
4.3.2 Recruitment and selection practices.....	53
4.5 Culture context.....	55
4.6 <i>Guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> comparison based on GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture.....	56
4.6.1 Performance Orientation	56
4.6.2 Assertiveness.....	57
4.6.3 Future Orientation	58
4.6.4 Humane Orientation.....	59
4.6.5 Institutional collectivism.....	60
4.6.6 In-Group Collectivism	61
4.6.7 Gender Egalitarianism.....	62
4.6.8 Power Distance	63
4.6.9 Uncertainty Avoidance	64
4.7 Conclusion	64
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	66
5.0 Introduction.....	66
5.1 <i>Guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> as informal social networks	67
5.2 Recruitment and selection policies and practices.....	68

5.3 Culture context: Similarities and differences between <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> based on GLOBE Study's cultural dimensions	69
5.4 Managers' perceptions towards use of <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> in recruitment and selection.....	73
5.5 Changing trends in <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i>	73
5.6 Research Contribution	74
5.6.1 Academic Contribution	74
5.6.2 Managerial Contribution	74
5.7 Conclusion	75
Appendices.....	92

Word Count: 24,988

(Excluding References)

List of Tables

List of Tables	103
Table 2-1: Cultural Dimensions and Origin Model	103
Table 2-2: Nine Dimensions of the Culture Measurement in GLOBE Model.....	103
Table 3-1: Demographic characteristics of the 24 interviewees	104
Table 4-1 List of Themes	105
Table 5-1 Comparison of the most significant differences and similarities between <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> using GLOBE study's culture dimensions.....	108

Title: A cross-cultural comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection

June 2020

Abstract

This research compares and reports on distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. To enrich, GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture were used to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context. An evident lack of exploratory research using comparative approach provided an opportunity to develop an insight of the phenomenon as well as understand the reasons of their presence. Drawing on social network theory, a micro-level analysis initiated managerial perspective towards use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection. To address research gaps, using purposive sampling, in-depth open-ended semi-structured interviews of 22 middle-to-senior level managers and 2 industry experts were conducted, leading to thematic analysis. Study observed some major similarities and some fundamental differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish*. Both uniquely serve as building blocks of their society, developed through reciprocation and ties of trust over a period and play major role in social network cohesion when selecting at work. *Guanxi* draws on heterogeneous groups (weak ties) and more accessible to outsiders with loose emotional propensities influencing recruitment and selection. Whereas, *sifarish* draws on homogenous groups (strong ties) with less freedom for diversity, hence "strength of strong ties" seemed more realistic notion for Pakistani managers. Original contribution of this research lies in comparatively exploring use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection in culture context. Informal social networks may benefit managers along with merit-based system at informational level by creating a hybrid recruitment and selection system. Unfolding *guanxi* in a non-Chinese environment marked its strength. Study recommends future interdisciplinary studies with larger sample size using multi-level analysis (employees and managers) and different research methods (multi-case study, mix-methods) with other factors (political and socio-economic) for conceptual precision and triangulation of empirical findings across other societies.

Key words: Informal social networks, *Guanxi*, *Sifarish*, Social network theory, Recruitment and selection, GLOBE Study, Cross-culture, Comparison

Word Count: 306

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my brother for his caring support and encouragement and to my lovely nieces and nephew for their charming and refreshing company which was necessary to keep me motivated through this journey.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Dr. Zunaira Saqib, Assistant Professor, NUST Business School (NBS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). Her continuous mentorship, support, and guidance were helpful to nurture my academic and research work. I am grateful to her for providing extensive and timely feedbacks necessary for quality research. I am extremely obliged to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during this research work. Especially each of the members of my General Examination Committee (GEC) has provided me extensive guidance and taught me a great deal about scientific research. I would especially like to appreciate and thank Dr. Asfia Obaid, Head of Department, Management and HR, NUST Business School (NBS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), for her rigorous feedback to make this research meaningful. As my teacher and mentor, she has taught me more than I could ever give her credit for here. She has shown me, by her example, how a worthy academician and researcher should be. I greatly owe the opportunity to produce this research work to the trust and welcoming support of the Chinese and Pakistani participating organizations and their top management for providing me access to the research participants.

In the pursuit of this research work, my family has been very important to me. I would especially like to thank my brother, whose financial support, utmost care and reassurance have been with me especially in the days when I went through surgery and critical health issues. Importantly, I cherished every moment spent with my nephew and nieces, my little bundles of joy, sparkling with unending inspiration as very much needed to keep me driven through this journey.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Background

In international HRM and recruitment and selection literature, there's ongoing scholarly debate whether informal social networks will persist for long or fade away. Informal social networks have long been an effective way to search a job (Ang & Tan, 2015; Weng & Xu, 2018), where candidates may acquiring job of choice through exchange of job information, or employers may get person-specific information about potential job seekers resulting in the best match (Cappellari & Tatsiramos, 2015). Studies suggest strong connection between affective relations and informal social networks in recruitment and selection (Sven Horak, 2017; Sven Horak et al., 2018; Alena Ledeneva, 2009; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). Social network theorist Granovetter (1983) first studied the process of getting job. He focused weak tie between job seeking individual and person supplying information about job. He further reasoned that information leading to a job from strong ties might be same but since an individual communicates with strong ties more frequently so that person may not use them or not to strain their relationship. Granovetter (1983) suggested that such affective ties and resulting relationships in reciprocation may bring significant benefits to organizations by increasing their social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2009; Sven Horak, 2017, 2018; Kwon & Adler, 2014; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017a; Portes, 1998; Rowley, Bae, Horak, & Bacouel-Jentjens, 2017; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

The influence of emotional ties or affective networks outside work on work relations both in individualistic and collectivist societies has been described using social network theory research (Ang & Tan, 2015; Weng & Xu, 2018). Extensive scholarly research has been built on informal social networks over decades. There has been abundance of studies conducted on *guanxi*, as C. Chen, Chen, and Huang (2013) recognized that more than 200 articles have been printed on it in collection of referred journals from 1990 - 2010. Whereas, a somewhat similar informal social network, *sifarish*, in South Asia, Pakistan has been thus far overlooked by scholars in comparison. Theoretical building on role of informal social networks in recruitment and selection in the Asian part of the world has only relied on research work done on *guanxi*.

Consequently, it has been assumed that what is right for *guanxi*, might be same across informal social networks in other Asian societies.

Considering scarcity of exploratory research comparing *guanxi and sifarish*, using *social network theory*, the objective of this research was to initiate a micro-level analysis to compare and understand similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Additionally, GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture were used to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in cultural context. Research gap of this study also stemmed from view point of a group of management scholars who argued that informal social networks might be significant in transitional economies and decline as soon as formal economic and governmental institutions evolve in their effectiveness, as people might draw on formal and more reliable ways (Annen, 2003; Ayentimi, Burgess, & Brown, 2018; Cooke, 2019; Nadeem, de Luque, & Organization, 2018; Peng, Wang, & Jiang, 2008; Shimpuku & Norr, 2012). Whereas, classical sociologists viewed that transition from primeval communal networks to urbanized modern multifaceted society is gained through solidarity and harmony (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016). In this development process, initial fragments of clan based compounds dissolved into division of labour demand in modern societies, and contractual relations based on cooperation and solidarity replaced the sole dependence on clan or kin-ship base (Durkheim, 2014). Both streams of arguments view informal social networks as disappearing over the period. However, if so, why do *guanxi* and *sifarish* still continue to exist?

Both *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks differently carry society-spanning (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; Park, Kim, Cheng, & Lee, 2019; Xin & Pearce, 1996; Yeung & Tung, 1996; Zhu, 2018). This comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection based on culture context may uniquely explain culturally embedded phenomenon of informal social networks through logical fabric of comparison. Comparative studies are limited and no study has yet comparatively explored *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection. Moreover, scholars have urge to conduct comparative studies to generate better understanding among academics, practitioners, policy makers, consultants, and students across the societies. This will also enable them to analyze not only new markets but also pursue managerial perspective as they embrace unique multi-cultural diversity while operating across societies (Banks et al., 2018; Kim &

Ployhart, 2018). While addressing the identified research gaps, this study pursued a comparative approach to compare and understand the difference and similarities between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. This approach is led by Teune & Przeworski's, (1970) method of MSSD (Most Similar Systems Design), under which similar objects of research are compared to find out similarities and differences.

1.2 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is based on multiple factors. Firstly, the rationale of this research is based upon evident lack of exploratory research on informal social networks using comparative approach across cultures. Mainstream research conducted on *guanxi* and *sifarish* reflects unique characteristics of the two. In addition, while conducting an integrative review and setting new directions for future research on *guanxi*, C. C. Chen et al. (2013) noted that majority of the research used survey methods (either method of ego-centric network nomination, or paper and pencil questionnaire) which leaves limited time and space to answer questions regarding dynamic interactions between informal social network members across societies. Nadeem and Kayani (2017) also noted that due to lack of exploratory research on informal social networks in Pakistan, there's need to develop an in-depth understanding about historical role of *sifarish* in business landscape of Pakistan. This allowed us to address the research gap by comparatively exploring existence of *guanxi* and *sifarish* through managerial perspective. As Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, and De Luque (2006), Sven Horak and Taube (2016), and Nadeem and Kayani (2017) strongly emphasized on exploring and advancing understanding about variations of human behavior towards informal social networks across different cultures.

Secondly, usually informal networks were considered of great significance in transitional economies for coordinating activities where formal institutions such as formal rules, agreements, contracts, law, courts, etc. are either ineffective or don't exist (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Contrary to this, present literature suggests that informal institutions may even persist not only in transitional economies but also continue in emerging and advanced economies (P. P. Li & Xie, 2019; North, 1990; Peng, Sun, Pinkham, & Chen, 2009; Peng et al., 2008; Xie, Zeng, Zang, & Zou, 2017). Therefore, through logical fabric of comparison, this study may uniquely compare *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context.

Thirdly, to better understand the culture context, HR practitioners are essentially required to understand the country culture before hunting the talent (Cooke, 2019; Cooke et al., 2014; Meyer & Xin, 2018; Singh, 2014). Managers should know about significance of unique affective social ties mechanism deeply ingrained in a culture and their likelihood to persist in future (Sven Horak & Klein, 2016). This possibility suggested that there's need to take a boundary condition of culture into account while comparatively exploring similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context.

Fourthly, theoretical framing to study informal social networks has been identified at various points rooted in sociology and economics (Hennart, 2015). Past studies using concept of *social capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) as a frame studied informal ties as the 'intangible,' informal mechanisms (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1992; Putnam, 1995; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). However, it covered less facets of informal aspects of social networks in which these are shaped across the world (Sven Horak, 2017; Sven Horak et al., 2018; Alena Ledeneva, 2009; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). The most prevalent method to study informal networks has been through frame of *social networks* (M. Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1973, 2017) advanced understanding about *social networks* and classified types of ties for network organization and argued that it is weak ties that are actually strong ties. This necessitated to explore "strength of weak ties" among Chinese and Pakistani managers in recruitment and selection.

Finally, following the call for research by Sven Horak et al. (2018) on the bright and dark sides of informal social networking across cultures and Nadeem and Kayani (2017) writing on ethical versus unethical use of *sifarish* as informal social networking in recruitment and selection in Pakistan also urged this study. While IHRM literature reports employers' transition towards adoption of international best practices in recruitment and selection to attract the best talent for superior employee performance and to gain competitive edge over the competitors in the market, still the social ties continue to play significant role in getting desired job (Islam, 2004; Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). For this reason, the integration of GLOBE Study in this research uniquely identified distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context, which has not been explored before.

1.2 Research objectives and Research Questions

The problem statement of the research is,

“To compare and understand the difference and similarities between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context”.

This research aimed to meet following objectives:

- To compare and understand how and why informal social networks are used by Chinese (*guanxi*) and Pakistani (*sifarish*) managers in recruitment and selection in Pakistan
- To find distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context

Based on extensive IHRM and recruitment and selection literature review and emerging research gaps, following research questions were formulated:

- Which type of informal social networks are used in recruitment and selection by Chinese and Pakistani managers in Pakistan and why?
- How and why does *guanxi* and *sifarish* influence managers’ perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection?
- How *guanxi* and *sifarish* are similar or different when compared` in culture context?

1.3 Organization of the thesis

This thesis has been outlined into five (5) chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the research, its significance while identifying research gaps and outlining the sequence of the study.

Chapter 2 gives a critical review of relevant literature from different domains like IHRM, recruitment and selection, and international management, sociology, psychology, economics, and research methods to link and address main themes of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*), recruitment and selection (policies and practices), and cultural context in this study. While doing this, types of informal social networks used by Chinese and Pakistani managers are

explored and questions are raised pertaining degree to which they can be explained by ongoing debates in IHRM related to their use in recruitment and selection. The chapter also addressed how concepts of *guanxi* and *sifarish* are similar or different in culture context using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture to explain aspects related to the undertaken research questions.

Chapter 3 describes methodology, elaborates different rationales for using in-depth open-ended semi-structured interviews in this qualitative study as most appropriate to research questions of this study. In addition, this chapter provides details about how data for this research was collected detailing about levels of data collection, interview guide for managers, conduct of interviews, how data was thematically analyzed, and research limitations.

Chapter 4 analyzes findings of this study and discusses types of informal social networks used by Chinese and Pakistani managers in recruitment and selection while giving insight into data analysis through comparative approach in cultural context. Using managerial perspective, the chapter focused on how and why does *guanxi* or *sifarish* influence managers' perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. This helped to identify similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture to build a logical comparison as aligned with research questions.

Chapter 5 discusses most prevalent type of informal social networks used by Chinese and Pakistani managers in recruitment and selection. The chapter further discusses how and why does *guanxi* or *sifarish* influence managers' perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. The chapter also highlights distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context. Finally, conclusion summarizes this study with research contribution, and future recommendations for academics, practitioners and students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This research attempted to compare and understand similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Additionally, GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture were used to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in cultural context. This chapter has been developed considering use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection as emerging literature necessitated comparative exploration in culture context.

Since long, the connection between affective relationships and informal social networks prevailing in recruitment and selection has been drawing scholars' interest (Sven Horak, 2014; Sven Horak, 2017; Sven Horak, 2018; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; M. Granovetter, 2017; M. Granovetter, 1973). However, the informal dimension of social networks in recruitment and selection has received comparably less scholarly attention especially in comparative studies (Sven Horak, 2018; Sven Horak et al., 2018; Sven Horak & Klein, 2016; Nadeem et al., 2018; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; Rowley, Bae, Horak, & Bacouel-Jentjens, 2017). Consequently, over the last few decades, IHRM and recruitment and selection literature on mechanism of managing recruitment and selection using informal social networks is increasingly emerging with rich history in background (Sven Horak & Klein, 2016; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; Rowley et al., 2017; Weber, 1951; C. Yang & Yang, 2020; X. Huang, 2008; J. H. Kang, Ling, & Barclay, 2019).

Although the demand for recruitment and selection of staff is universal but the way it is done in practice specifies that some specific and precise methods are favored which may be specific to the culture (Sven Horak, 2017; Sven Horak, 2018; Sven Horak et al., 2018; Hsu & Leat, 2000; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). As strong formal HR systems are increasingly relying on rigorous recruitment and selection procedures for superior organizational performance and sustainable competitive advantage to outperform their competitors (Ang & Tan, 2015; Cooke, 2004, 2019; Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; C. Zheng, Morrison, & O'Neill, 2006). H. Kang and Shen (2017) and Sven Horak (2017) noted that large

organizations adopt formal systems of recruitment and selection such as advertisement, job fairs, campus recruitment as a market-oriented technique for recruiting, still informality at work is reflected in recruitment and selection. Hence, using comparative approach, this chapter established central role of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017).

Based on research objectives and research questions of the study, this chapter has been built on extensive review of IHRM and recruitment and selection literature on informal social networks in recruitment and selection. This chapter is distributed into four key sections that establish foundation of this study. The first section discusses theoretical foundation as found through IHRM and recruitment and selection literature including theories more frequently used to study informal social networks. The second section highlights informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) used by Chinese and Pakistani managers. Third section discusses recruitment and selection policies and practices. Using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture, the third section builds comparative view of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context.

2.1 Theories related to Social Networks

This section of the study highlights theories as they laid foundation for existence of informal social networks in recruitment and selection over the years in a logical and systematic manner. Details about two most widely used theories to study social networks; social networks and social capital (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017) along with other theories are given below:

2.1.1 Social Networks Theory

According to Granovetter (1973), the fundamental weakness of sociological theory was the inability to link individual interactions at micro-level with the patterns at macro-level in a meaningful way. Granovetter (1973) expansively studied the process of getting job, and concluded that 'weak ties' are actually 'strong ties' and supply information about the job (Ko & Liu, 2017). Granovetter (1973) assumed that information leading to a job from strong ties might be same but since an individual communicates with strong ties more frequently so that person may not use them or not to strain their relationship. He further extensively studied spread of job information using informal social networks and classified types of ties as *strong ties*

(homogenous groups that are emotionally close, e.g., family, community), *weak ties* (heterogeneous groups with transactional relationships and loose emotional tendencies e.g., family, friends, comrade in arms, colleagues, school mates, village fellows), or *absent ties* (lack of interaction but can become strong/weak tie through interaction) (Marsden, 2017). Therefore, considering multi-dimensional literature on social networks, and scarcity of research using such comparative approach, the focus and parameters of this study are a start of debate on extending knowledge on informality in recruitment and selection as embedded in cultural context and duly aligned with research objective of this study.

2.1.2 Other theories related to Social Networks

Other theories that also have been considered to study informal social networks in recruitment and selection include;

2.1.2.1 Social Capital Theory

According to Coleman (1988) social capital is “structure of relations between actors and among actors” (p.98). The driving concept behind social capital theory is that an individual's position within a specific group provides specific benefits (Bähr & Abraham, 2016). In terms of relationship dealing, P. S. Adler and Kwon (2002) and Lee (2009) are of the view that social capital is not merely about cordial or warm relations but entail better business acumen; the social contacts of a social actor with friends, family, acquaintances are all asset for the organization. Horak & Taube (2016) cautioned to not to complicate *guanxi* by social capital, as that reflects Western thought and might not remain the same. Additionally, Acquah and Appiah-Nkrumah (2011) found that in Ghana, social capital negatively influenced organizational performance when politicians favored for selection of non-qualified individuals.

2.1.2.2 Social Resource Theory

Developed in the 1960s, SRT (Social Resource Theory) advocates that contact higher in status have more diverse and larger social networks than the low-status contacts (Marsden, 2017). However, scholars contend that SRT based on unique conceptualization of utilization of network is incompatible with theoretical logic of Granovetter (1973) stressing that weak tie exclusively

function as a bridge (Cheng, 1994). Granovetter claimed that the forbidden triad makes people get heterogeneous resources from their strong tie, in this study the job hunt, whereas SRT claimed that social resources accessible to the social agents are determined by their location or social position (e.g., position, hierarchy) of networks. (Cheng, 1994; Granovetter, 1973, 1983).

2.1.2.3 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory describes it through exchange of gifts or favors between persons without specific obligations to return (P. S. Adler & Kwon, 2002). As Hwang (1987), p. 963) viewed that if a potential resource allocator receives a very precious gift, it will be very difficult to refuse the request. This implies that applicants will get a greater influence to obtain job of choice, which is an outcome of an informal norm of social reciprocation. Research suggests that such social exchanges may result both in helpful as well as harmful way for the resource allocator, applicant, employers, and community where they operate (Danielle E. Warren, 2004).

Most of the past studies have explicitly reflected the cultural context as where these networks are formed and embedded (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016). However, no study has yet compared use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection under culture context.

2.2 Informal Social Networks

A careful review of literature suggests that informal social networks may be termed as aggregate of informal relational social ties between people under prevalent values and norms of behavior in a culture (Rowley et al., 2017; Sven Horak, 2016). Whereas P. P. Li (2007b) defined it as “the nature of social ties and events as implicitly assumed, endogenously embraced, and flexibly enforced by peer pressures horizontally in a particularistic personalized process” (pg. 229).

North (1990) referred informal social networks as setting rules of the game and ‘*informal institution*’ and found them being drawn from traditions, customs, norms, values, and beliefs that influence decision making and behavior at work. Literature on social network and classical social ties may help to understand and define basic elements and characteristics featuring cohesion of informal social networks (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016).

2.2.1 Antecedents of informal social networks

The fundamental criteria for structural set-up of social network is defined using “*network principle*”, cause-based (past joint experience or a shared heritage, strong degree irreversible) or purpose-based (utilitarian, persist over time) (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Lew, 2013; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Furthermore, “*network sizes*” are different and correlate with conceptualization of social capital on which a social actor may draw (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016). Also, networks vary as per “*diversity*” in structural embeddedness (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Lew, 2013; J.-D. Luo & Yeh, 2012). Another characteristic is to “*bridge structural holes*” between social network members, and between networks (Burt, 1997, 2009; Coleman, 1988). The “*openness*” of social networks may introduce fresh candidates to social network and enhance its strength (Sven Horak, 2018; Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; J.-D. Luo, 2011). The “*tie nature*” may be more particularistic or universalistic (Sven Horak, 2018; J.-D. Luo, 2011; Opper, Nee, & Holm, 2017). According to Sven Horak and Taube (2016) this directly relate the notion of “*tie base*”, (predefined or more functional) with low openness. Finally, “*reciprocity*” is critical to establish trust and trustworthiness where reciprocal behavior gets positively rewarded and non-reciprocal behavior is sanctioned (Akai & Netzer, 2012; Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; R. D. Putnam, 2000; Song, Cadsby, & Bi, 2012). In general, it is postulated that norms of reciprocity majorly determine cohesion in informal social networks.

2.2.2 Guanxi and Sifarish in cultural context

As reported earlier, the theoretical building on informal social networks in recruitment and selection in eastern context primarily has relied on *guanxi* studies but a somewhat similar informal social network in Pakistan, *sifarish* surprisingly has received less attention, hence less explanation for Pakistan’s competitive strength through informal social networks, in-group cohesiveness and collectivist reflection of the society.

2.2.2.1 Guanxi in the context of Chinese culture

The mandarin word *Guanxi* (pronounced as “gwan-shee”), (kuan-his) (关系) loosely translates into “connections”, which comprises of two words ‘*guan*’ and ‘*xi*’, and is literally translated into “close link”, “to connect”, a “pass/gate” or “relationships”, is commonly used in Chinese

societies referring “particularistic ties” or ‘personal connections’ with strong links for interpersonal dyads (Abosag & Lee, 2013; Buckley, Clegg, & Tan, 2010; C. C. Chen, Chen, & Xin, 2004; Y. Chen, Friedman, Yu, & Sun, 2011; Gibb & Zhang, 2017; Jacobs, 1979, 1982; L.-H. Lin, 2011; Sato, 2010). In China, under conventional wisdom, *guanxi* as a societal construct is considered highly essential to effectively accomplish any task and to build independent informal social contacts between two individuals to maintain social and personal transactions in flow over the years (J. H. Kang, Ling, & Barclay, 2019; Weber, 1951; C. Yang & Yang, 2020).

Many scholars have attempted to describe *guanxi* as informal institution (North, 1990; Peng, Wang, & Jiang, 2008) rooted in cultural environment composed of strong informal networks and weak formal institutions (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; P. P. Li, 2007b). It was Weber (1951) who observed that there’s no obligatory sense in China towards impersonal communities whether they are ideological, political or of any other nature (p.209). Though recruitment and selection based on social network exists in Western societies but importance of informal ties seems to be valued more in collectivist societies (Burt, 1997; Sven Horak, 2017; Rowley et al., 2017).

Guanxi has existed for centuries and *family vs. non-family guanxi* distinguishes between familial and non-familial relationships, which dates back to old China where Confucius prescribed a governance framework of five fundamental relationships (emperor-to-official, father-to-son, elder brother-to-younger brother, husband-to-wife, and friend-to-friend) called as *wu lun* (无论) (Bell, 2000; Dou & Li, 2013). Confucian teachings focus on commonality and harmonization with family relationships as foundation or the prototype of non-family relationships with focus on familial collectivism (Lew, 2013; Weber, 1951; Yeung & Tung, 1996). Difference between familial and non-familial relationship is that these are based on ascribed/preordained vs. achieved relations, where former is referred to family, birthplace, ethnicity, kinship, and later to achieved characteristics such as colleagues, schoolmates, and friendships, same military unit having shared experience, long march etc. (Child, 2003; Gold et al., 2002; Lockett, Currie, Finn, Martin, & Waring, 2014; Zhuo & Wang, 2015). Other merit is between family versus familiar or social relations, which are well acquainted but are non-family (Jacobs, 1982; Tsang, 1998).

Guthrie (1998) carefully distinguished and explained “*guanxi*” and “practices” of *guanxi* as two different procedures (X. Chen & Wu, 2011; Guthrie, 1998). He termed “practices” of *guanxi*

where *guanxi* is used instrumentally for varied purposes such as to complete tasks, to deal with obligation, or for exchanges (Guthrie, 1998). Furthermore, in practice, studies reflect two types of *guanxi*; *informational guanxi* and *influential guanxi* and it is interpersonal or sentimental social connection which is maintained to satisfy needs (Brown et al., 2016; Sven Horak & Klein, 2016; Yulei Weng & Hao Xu, 2018). The *informational guanxi* works where an intermediary helper acts as bridge between job seeker and employer by giving required job information. Whereas *influential guanxi* serves the person by affecting selection decisions (Gibb & Zhang, 2017; Hanser, 2002; X. J. W. Huang, employment & society, 2008; Khavul, Bruton, & Wood, 2009; Alena Ledeneva, 2009; J. Park et al., 2019; Y. Zhu, 2018).. Therefore, this study specially focused to compare and understand similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Additionally, using GLOBE Study's dimensions of culture, this research identified distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

2.2.2.2 *Sifarish* in the context of Pakistani culture

Sifarish is Urdu word “سفارش کرنا” literally means as a ‘special recommendation’ or a ‘close connection’ (Ahmad, Allen, Raziq, & ur Rehman, 2019; Islam, 2004; Mahrukh Khan, Shaikh, Memon, & Kazi, 2019; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). In Pakistan, the term *sifarish* is termed as an act to achieve the end through use of social networking or personal connections based on kinship ties or exchange of special favors (Islam, 2004; G. Ma, 2015; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). While studying *sifarish* in context of Pakistan, limited literature was found and existing literature suggested that there are many factors such as *in-group collectivism*, compliance to hierarchy, high *power distance*, low assertiveness, rigid compliance to hierarchy, centralization, nepotism, gender differentiation, nepotism, low egalitarianism and corruption in managerial roles that play significantly in recruitment and selection (Islam, 2004; K. Khan & Anwar, 2016; Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015; Mangi, Shah, & Ghumro, 2012; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). Pakistan's social structures based on kinship or family orientations have nurtured culture of *sifarish* (Islam, 2004; G. Ma, 2015). As it has become a standard to get things done (to secure a desired job, to get admission into academic institute, to get any business contract etc.) by means of telephone connections when short of straight bribing thus mocking at rational criteria of selection (Hussain, 2012; Islam, 2004; G. Ma, 2015; Mangi et al., 2012; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017).

Furthermore, recruitment and selection practices in highly collectivist societies emphasize trust, long-term retention, and loyalty to ensure selection of a trustworthy candidate that employers may invest in for long-term (Sven Horak, 2017; K. Hutchings & D. Weir, 2006; Rowley et al., 2017). According to GLOBE study, Pakistan ranks very high on in-group collectivism (Nadeem et al., 2018). According to Nadeem and Kayani (2017), caste and clan (*Zaat, baradari*) and religion continue to be routinely talked about topics in the country. Additionally, with urbanization, formation of formal institutions, and growing of multinationals, a transition has been observed towards adaptation of the best practices for better economic outputs and competitive advantage in the country (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017).

2.2.3 Perceptions of Chinese managers about use of *guanxi*

A careful review of literature suggests two different managerial views about use of informal social networks (*guanxi*) in recruitment and selection. The first view reflected *guanxi* in positive and favorable light stating that it adds elements of humanity to cold transactions and plays important role when consistent guidelines or regulations for social conduct are not present (Gold et al., 2002; Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2016). This view linked *guanxi* with positive organizational outcomes in form of creating a socially connected environment at work resulting in employees' reduced job turnover intentions (Arasli, Bavik, & Ekiz, 2006), better talent retention (Brown et al., 2016; Dustmann, Glitz, Schönberg, & Brücker, 2015; K. E. Meyer & Xin, 2018), good planning for recruitment (e.g. (Aycan et al., 2000; Youngok Kim & Gao, 2010), while facilitating other HRM functions (Law, Wong, Wang, & Wang, 2000; Wei, Liu, Chen, & Wu, 2010). Whereas, other stream of views contended and took *guanxi* as a shortcut to approach the 'right person' and to ask for special favors (Jiang, Cannella, Gao, & Jiao, 2013; Y. Luo & Chen, 1997). Some managers reported *guanxi* fueling corruption, and is an obstacle in Chinese society's progress founded in power of law and viewed it as violation of public ethics, fairness and impartiality (Gold et al., 2002; Sun, Hu, & Hillman, 2016). Therefore, this study has substantiated argument by comparing it with *sifarish* to build comparative understanding about informal networks across other societies.

2.2.4 Perceptions of managers about use of *sifarish*

Pakistani managers have been reported to be more comfortable to work with individuals from their prior known networks instead of opting for individuals from entirely unknown sources (Ahmad et al., 2019; Islam, 2004; Mahrukh Khan et al., 2019; Uddin, 2019). Notably, some managers viewed use of personal contacts and social networks to work for the deserving or marginalized ones as a way to have job information or to get selected (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). Past studies reflect negative views about *sifarish* stating it promotes corruption under notions of nepotism as it violates merit (Hussain, 2012; Islam, 2004; Khatri, 2013). Arguing about dark sides of *sifarish*, managers have been of the view that due to ethnic, religious and political influences transparent, unbiased and merit-based recruitment and selection systems have not appeared in public and private sector of the country (S. Ali, 2015; S. Uzair, Majeed, & Shakeel, 2017). Whereas, current stream of studies positively reports that a recruitment and selection based on *sifarish* may have advantage to organizations in form of increased efficiency and low transactional costs while bringing gains to organizations (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017).

Despite of internationalization, industrialization, and modernization, the concept of informal social networking continues to prevail (Ayentimi, Burgess, & Brown, 2018; Gibb & Zhang, 2017; K. E. Meyer & Xin, 2018; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). However in the context of China and Pakistan, limited research has considered exploring or comparing informal social networks and their influence on recruitment and selection. Using GLOBE Study and by taking managerial perspectives, this study further identified distinct similarities and differences in *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on cultural context. Management studies also caution regarding use of informal network-based hiring as the best practices due to the factors involved such as perception of fairness and justice, ethical vs. unethical *sifarish* etc.(Stuart-Fox, 2004; M. M.-h. Yang, 1994). Therefore, using inductive theorizing, present study takes managerial perspective to understand and compare *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context.

2.3 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment refers to organizational efforts directed towards attracting and identifying competent applicants for the vacancies (Barber, 1998; Collins & Han, 2004; Celani & Singh, 2011). S. Uzair, Kanwal, S., Haleem, R. (2017), Banks et al. (2018), and have referred *recruitment* as a process through which organizations seek the best fit applicant for job and organization. While *selection* was termed as a process through which organizations pick the finest qualified applicant to fill vacant position in an organization (Youngsang Kim & Ployhart, 2018).

In the midst of globalization and mobility of applicants pool, Manroop (2013) argued that besides looking into cultural barriers (e.g., language, experience, cultural differences, practices, social networks, credential recognition and discrimination) in recruitment and selection, scholars should look into less attended issue such as sources of recruitment ('referral system'), selection instruments (e.g job interview), interpersonal dynamics (Abrokwah, Yuhui, Agyare, & Asamany, 2018; Ayentimi et al., 2018) and evaluation of interview to assess a culturally diverse pool of applicants (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016). This implies that giving attention to culture context may help to avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding and mistakes of losing potential job candidates and highlights significance of enhancing interaction with members from other culture at workplace soon after selection.

2.3.1 Recruitment and selection policies and practices

Moreover, various scholars have contributed that different societies use different modes in their recruitment and selection policies and practices (Björkman & Xiucheng, 2002; Budhwar & Debrah, 2001; Sven Horak, 2018; Sven Horak & Klein, 2016; Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Rowley et al., 2017). They asserted that for example in collectivist cultures, external recruitments are done in limited number as it's challenging for the new entrants to enter from outside in a tight social network or face the resistance (Mark Granovetter, 1983; Khavul, Bruton, & Wood, 2009; R. Ma & Allen, 2009; R. Ma, Huang, & Shenkar, 2011; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Likewise, while recruiting senior and middle managers, consultants, through newspapers are used to avoid uncertainty and to bring orientation to job criteria and performance (Nadeem et al., 2018).

Critical review of literature confirms that Chinese are more collectivistic and less individualistic and prefer using collective wisdom and therefore conduct panel interviews in practice to ensure decisions are made in harmony (Klasing, 2013; Koch & Koch, 2007). Chinese values are very much embedded, where senior employees serving over the years are promoted (Child, 2003; Farh & Cheng, 2000; Jaw, Ling, Yu-Ping Wang, & Chang, 2007; Wah, 2001). Family based collectivism is reflected under the influence of Confucian tradition, hybrid planned economy, and communist ideology (Koch & Koch, 2007; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). To promote merit based and market oriented selection systems, literature reports a progressive shift from centralized into decentralized policies and processes focused at job analysis and job specification (e.g., skills and personal abilities) along with personal contacts (Braun & Warner, 2002; C. C. Chen et al., 2004; Hartmann, Feisel, & Schober, 2010; Xiao & Tsui, 2007).

Whereas, in Pakistan, scholars (A. Ahmed et al., 2017; Kalia, 2015; Mangi et al., 2012; Nabi et al., 2014; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017; Ruwanpura & Hughes, 2016) assert that management as gatekeepers practices *sifarish* or reference based recruitment and selection. Collectivist orientation of Pakistani culture, high inclination to uncertainty avoidance, high power distance and low gender egalitarianism is a result of different cultural traditions influencing recruitment and selection policies and practices which includes nepotism, rigid compliance to authority, convergence, patriarchy, and corruption (Ergeneli, Gohar, & Temirbekova, 2007; Islam, 2004; Kalia, 2015; Mangi et al., 2012). Studies report that influence of religion is largely consistent, also organizations flexibly benefit from internal sources, referrals and word-of-mouth for promotion and recruitment (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ahsan, 2018; Islam, 2004; Mahrukh Khan et al., 2019; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). Comparing recruitment and selection policies and practices may help to identify policy versus practice gaps.

2.4 Culture, Cross-culture studies and GLOBE Study

2.4.1 Culture

Culture as defined by GLOBE study is referred as ‘shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations’ (House, Hanges, Javidan,

Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) (pg.293). Culture is measured through common values, behaviors, institutional practices, as ‘what is’, whereas values are stated in form of judgments about ‘what should be’ aspects of culture (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009). For long, scholars have been debating about influence of culture in management sciences, one group asserted that behavior of managers is becoming more of the same in nature, whereas other argued its dissimilar (Form, 1979; Hickson, Negandhi, 1979; Hofstede, 1980; Laurent, 1983; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

2.4.2 Cross-culture studies

Cross-culture studies have been reported to enhance understanding while stressing collaboration and advance communication beyond boundaries. Past studies on cross-culture have evolved by covering milestones studies on dimensions of culture by notable researchers, some of them are summarized below in Cultural Dimensions and Origin Model (**Table 2-1**).

Sr.	Cultural Dimension	Origin Model
1	Past/Present Time Orientation	Kluckhohn (1961)
2	Achievement	McClelland (1961)
3	Uncertainty Avoidance	Cyert & March (1963), Hofstede (1980)
4	Locus of Control	Rotter (1966)
5	Monochronic vs. Polychronic	(Hall (1973)
6	Power Distance	Mulder (1971), Hofstede (1980)
7	Uncertainty Avoidance	Hofstede (1980)
8	Short/Long term orientation	Hofstede (1980)
9	Masculinity	Hofstede (1980)
10	Individualism vs. Collectivism	Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars (1993)
11	Hierarchy	Hierarchy
12	Hofstede (1980), House (2004)	Hofstede (1980), House (2004)
13	Neutral vs. Emotional / Assertiveness	Trompenaars (1993), Hofstede (1980)
14	Particularism vs. Universalism	Trompenaars (1993)
15	Diffuse vs. Specific	Trompenaars (1993)
16	Achieved vs. Ascribed Status	Trompenaars (1993)
17	Individualism	Triandis (1995)
18	Deductive/Intuitive thinking	Foster (2000)
19	Trust	Covey (2008)

Table 2-1 Cultural Dimensions and Origin Model

2.4.3 Comparison of GLOBE study and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

To study dimensions of culture, majorly scholars have been comparing two studies on dimensions of culture; GLOBE study and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, whereas both are widely different on conceptual grounds (Beugelsdijk, Maseland, & Hoorn, 2015; Devinney & Hohberger, 2017). According to Javidan et al. (2006) GLOBE Study is theory-driven and

included 170 primary researchers with data collection including managers perspective from diverse industries i.e. food processing, financial and telecommunication services with cross-culture generalizability. Whereas Hofstede's is action-driven and study relied on only 1 primary researcher with data collection from managers of one single organization IBM and subsidiaries only and hence has greater chances of generalizability of findings (Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, & De Luque, 2006; Shi & Wang, 2011b). Since present study focused informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context, there was need for comprehensive cultural attributes which seemed more eloquently fulfilled by GLOBE Study (Venaik & Brewer, 2013). Therefore, GLOBE Study seemed more suitable in this scenarios of research when through comparative approach managerial perspective have been focus of the study and research questions required adding rich details for comparisons and fine-grained analysis.

Furthermore, surprisingly, Hofstede's culture dimensions did not assign number to China and only gave an estimated number derived from Hong Kong and Taiwan, whereas GLOBE Study collected culture and leadership data from China (House et al., 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, et al., 2006) and Pakistan's standing on GLOBE study was supplemented by a relevant study (Nadeem et al., 2018). Also, growing foreign business investments necessitate further research concerning informal social networks in emerging economies (H. Kang & Shen, 2016; J. Li, Qian, Lam, & Wang, 2000; Peng, 2012). Moreover, increasing number of scholars have relied on using GLOBE nine cultural dimensions while complementing its comprehensive theoretical and methodological rigor (Clark et al., 2016; Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009; Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, & House, 2006; Maria Khan, Waheed, Chengwen, Butt, & Ahmad, 2019; Nadeem et al., 2018). Hence, this research relied on the GLOBE study's nine cultural dimensions to set base of this research as aligned with research questions.

2.4.3 GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture

The GLOBE study by House et al. (2004), presents an extensive picture of different cultures. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study broadly evaluated nine key cultural attributes including: performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (House et al., 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, et al., 2006; Nadeem

et al., 2018). Besides including a complete description of these nine dimensions of culture, the efforts have been made to study past literature to enrich evidence on how these cultural dimensions influence recruitment and selection policies and practices. The cultural dimension ***Performance Orientation*** reflects that societies with a high performance orientation tend to recruit and select based on education, experience, skills, and personality (Nadeem et al., 2018). Whereas, societies on low, tend to select based on soft criteria e.g., social class, interpersonal skills, age (Aycan, 2005; Rao, 2009).

Assertiveness reflects that a society high on assertiveness considers tough behavior, competition, progress and success and consider fairness, competition, equity, and performance for final selection (Den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004; Nadeem et al., 2018). Societies low on assertiveness consider cooperation, tenderness, modesty consider integrity, loyalty, traditions, experience and seniority and regard competition as penalty with subtle and ambiguous communications to save 'face' (Chiang & Birtch, 2012; El-Kot & Leat, 2008; Hsu & Leat, 2000).

Future Orientation reflects that societies low on future orientations enjoy present and do not care to proactively develop or implement recruitment and selection plans and policies (Den Hartog et al., 2004; Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999; Venaik & Brewer, 2013). A high future oriented society will prepare for staffing, and 'll take training initiatives after selection (Pratt, Lepisto, & Dane, 2019; Tsui, Wang, & Xin, 2006; D. Wang et al., 2014).

Societies high on ***Humane Orientation*** tend to give importance to others such as family, friends, public, and unfamiliar persons, more than their own self in recruitment and selection decisions. Values like selflessness, kindness, love, need to belong, and motivate affiliate people and big-heartedness have more priority (Nadeem et al., 2018).

Institutional collectivism is less explored dimension and studying collectivism is important to determine effective recruitment and selection practices across different cultures through individualism vs collectivism considering. Whereas, in high ***In-Group Collectivism*** societies express loyalty, pride, and cohesiveness in their families or organizations for staffing (Canestrino, Ówiklicki, Magliocca, & Pawełek, 2020; Dastmalchian et al., 2020; Earley & Gibson, 1998).

Gender Egalitarianism has received less scholarly attention and evaluates the equality in treatment regardless of genders. In recruitment and selection, this regards whether men and women are represented equal across all levels (Marano, Sauerwald, & Van Essen, 2019; Ruwanpura & Hughes, 2016; Waldman et al., 2006).

Power Distance as recognized for collectivism, may influence career success (Aycan et al., 2000; Fu & Kamenou, 2011; Ramaswami, Huang, & Dreher, 2014) or people may expect unique privileges in their positions (Barbalet, 2017; Ramaswami et al., 2014). The balance and legitimacy of selection board has considered managers' power as de-legitimizing and academics and practitioners assert that a single strong manager may even outweigh risk of power abuses in high uncertainty environments (S. Kang & Kim, 2019; Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012).

Societies high on **Uncertainty Avoidance**, tend to avoid uncertainty and strive for consistency, formal recruitment and selection structure, procedures, and laws in daily routines. Societies high on *uncertainty avoidance* often provide schemes of career break and childcare assistance (Debus, Probst, König, & Kleinmann, 2012; S. Kang & Kim, 2019; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). Whereas societies on low, tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity practice with less structured policies and procedures (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009).

Table 2-2 : Nine Dimensions of the Culture Measurement in GLOBE Model

Power Distance	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) separated by power, authority, and prestige
In-Group Collectivism	Degree to which a culture's people (should) take pride in and (should) feel loyalty toward their families, organizations, and employers
Institutional Collectivism	Degree to which individuals are (should be) encouraged by institutions to be integrated into broader entities with harmony and cooperation as paramount principles at the expense of autonomy and individual freedom
Uncertainty Avoidance	Degree to which a culture's people (should) seek orderliness, consistency, and structure
Future Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) willing to defer immediate gratification for future benefits
Gender Egalitarianism	Degree to which a culture's people (should) support gender equality
Assertiveness	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) assertive, confrontational, and aggressive
Humane Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind toward others
Performance Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people (should) encourage and reward people for performance

The descriptions are derived from: House R.J. and Hanges P.J., Javidan M., Dorfman P.W., Gupta V.(2004).

Authors of GLOBE Study realized that what is idealized through values in a culture and what happens in practice might not always link, and summed (**Table 2-2**) through nine dimensions of culture that (a) cultural values and actual practices distinguish between cultures and organizations; (b) so cultural values and actual managerial practices may occur in unique difference; (c) the scale of cultural values and actual work practices keep interacting; and (d) the dimension or attributes of cultural values and actual work practices may be eloquently used at societal and organizational level (Shi & Wang, 2011a).

Based on systematic review of literature on IHRM and recruitment and selection and theories on social networks, this section addresses identified research gaps by creating a *conceptual framework* of the study. This helped to develop a comprehensive framework to study use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context. Also GLOBE study was used to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context. For better understanding, it is important to operationally define each of the term used in conceptual framework for greater clarity. Informal social networks (i.e. *guanxi* and *sifarish*) are considered as aggregate of informal social ties and events which are assumed implicitly, enforced flexibly, embraced endogenously and horizontally by peer pressures in a particularistic personalized process which influences recruitment and selection . Recruitment and selection refers to different recruitment and selection policies and practices to mark policy versus practice gaps. Culture shapes values, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors which influence final selection decisions of managers under culture context.

Within this research, the concept of informal social networks has been used to compare and understand *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context. In term of recruitment and selection, recruitment refers to an activity of establishing contact between an applicant and employer by using process of attracting, short-listing, identifying a large number of applicants for available positions which may involve initial testing, screening methods and proceeds to selection. Whereas selection refers to selecting the most competent and suited candidate and appointing for available positions which may involve interviews, or panel interviews. Similarly, in this research, the term recruitment and selection refers to policies and practices through which job seekers or applicants are recruited and selected and culture context served to identify distinct similarities and differences based on culture

context. This study focused on factors like informal social networks (i.e. *guanxi* and *sifarish*), recruitment and selection policies and practices and culture context.

2.6 Conclusion

A careful review of literature on IHRM, recruitment and selection, and international management suggested prevalence of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection which is maintained through reciprocal actions and ties of trust over a period. Methods used by GLOBE Study draw upon greater power of conceptualization, procedures and analysis than Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Managers practice informal social networks in recruitment and selection under cultural influences. Various definitions, characteristics and types of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks were explored to build on the research questions. The emerging concepts in *guanxi* and *sifarish* identified future trends and changing characteristics of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. In addition, GLOBE study's nine dimensions of culture helped to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context as aligned with research questions of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.0 Introduction

The broad aim of this research was to compare and understand similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Additionally, GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture were used to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in cultural context. Using managerial perspective, this study addressed the research gaps as pragmatically identified through a critical review of the IHRM and recruitment and selection literature above in the chapter two. As widely acknowledged, cultural contexts may have variance and influence different HR practices variably (Budhwar & Debrah, 2001; Horak & Klein, 2016; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017), that's why this study narrowed down its focus on comparative investigation of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context.

In an attempt to address research gaps, a multi-pronged strategy was used. At micro-level, semi-structured interviews were used to examine managers' perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. At meso-level, recruitment and selection policies, practices and regulations within each culture were explored to obtain contextual information. At macro-level, GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture were used to identify and compare distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

This chapter discusses methodology adopted to conduct this research which was qualitative involving 24 in-depth semi-structured interviews of managers to collect data. Furthermore, attempt was made to triangulate data with company forms, policies and practices to establish credible findings. This chapter begins with purpose and rationale of the study, and proceeds to details about research design strategy, research approach used to conduct this research, data collection and process of analysis along with ethical considerations and research limitations.

3.1 Purpose of the study and research questions

While narrowing down purpose of the study, this research was in response to under-researched comparative studies on informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context (Sven Horak, 2016; Sven Horak et al., 2018; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). In past, there has been abundance of studies conducted on *guanxi*, as also recognized by C. C. Chen, Chen, and Huang (2013) that more than 200 articles have been printed on it in collection of referred journals from 1990 - 2010. Whereas, a somewhat similar informal social network, *sifarish*, in South Asia, Pakistan has been thus far overlooked by scholars in comparison. Recent studies have recognized that most of the studies conducted on informal social networks are mainly developed through lens of the Western scholars and typical of the their societies, social structures and situations (Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Alena Ledeneva, 2018; Qi, 2013; Rowley et al., 2017; Sato, 2010). Under qualitative approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to incorporate managerial perspective about used of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context. From developing country like Pakistan, this research uniquely contributes to knowledge of academicians and practioners and addresses research gaps in IHRM and recruitment and selection literature. The study addressed these research questions:

- Which type of informal social networks are used in recruitment and selection by Chinese and Pakistani managers in Pakistan and why?
- How and why does *guanxi* and *sifarish* influence managers' perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection?
- How *guanxi* and *sifarish* are similar or different when compared` in culture context?

3.2 Rationale of study design strategy

Research design guides the whole research process as it is led by researcher's paradigmatic lens that places others in the researched context and gives a framework for data collection and data analysis while reflecting decisions about priority dimensions of research process (Avramidis & Smith, 1999; Bryman & Burgess, 2002a; Gardner, 2001; Saunders, 2011). The research context helps to understand what is really happening out there and how reality is being experienced (Bernard, 2013), which influences and shapes subjects' perceptions about a social reality in which they exist and which interests researcher to investigate (Obaid, 2013; Tsui et al., 2007; Welch et al., 2011). Five factors majorly influencing social research include; epistemological assumptions (about human knowledge), ontological assumptions (about realities encountered in research), theoretical link with research, ways and extent our values influence process of research (axiological assumptions) and practical considerations (Berends & Deken, 2019; Bryman, 2016; Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007). As these assumptions inevitably shape understanding about research questions, research methods, and how findings are interpreted (Bernard, 2013; Saunders, 2009). Studies caution management researchers to be careful of philosophical commitments made through research strategy as these considerably influence on what we do and how do we understand it under investigation (Johnson & Clark, 2006; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). To build credible research philosophy, a well-thought and coherent set of first three assumptions have been detailed in this chapter to support choice of methods, research design strategy, process of data collection and data analysis, while remaining two are covered in remaining section.

Qualitative research approach was used in this research as its benefits approach are widely cited to provide in-depth, enriched and detailed descriptions produced to strengthen exploration with potential to generate inductive theorizing (Bryman, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989; Welch, Piekkari,

Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011). This approach uncovers under addressed causes, reasons, issues, and descriptions with detailed elaborations though it can't build statistical associations which is possible in quantitative studies emphasizing dependency between social phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). However, aligned with research objectives, this interpretive approach uncovered *which* type of informal social networks are used in recruitment and selection by Chinese and Pakistani managers in Pakistan and *why* and especially *how* they influenced influence managers' perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection, while uncovering related issues, and detailed descriptions profoundly rooted in cultures (Berends & Deken, 2019; Bryman, 2016; Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007). Therefore, qualitative research approach seemed more suitable for our postulated research questions (Obaid, 2013; Tsui et al., 2007; Welch et al., 2011) inquiring about informal side of social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context and holds even more significance due to absence of any such comparative study conducted in culture context.

The motivation for using comparative research design was derived from research gap and research questions to elaborate and refine our qualitative approach to present comparative view of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context (Tsui, 2006; 2007; Child, 2002). This further guided data analysis and surfaced new concepts while generating persuasive insights for which such methods are best known for (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). Hence, Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002) contends that in qualitative research, thematic analysis typically takes in comparative approach that is progressively built through a process of classification, comparison, grouping and refining text segments to make and clarify definition of categories, themes within a data.

3.3 Philosophical and theoretical orientation

Qualitative research focuses on linking problem, theory, and method, whereas context influences and forms perceptions, opinions, and view of participant about undertaken social reality in which they exist (Bryman, 2004; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman & Burgess, 2002a). In exploratory

studies, data achieves significance when it is investigated using theoretical frame which essentially requires to understand connection between theory and research (Obaid, 2013). In qualitative research, scholars have categorized grounded theory, theoretical refinement, models, propositions, and a priori propositions as outcomes of research by using inductive and natural experimental approach have categorized grounded theory, theoretical refinement, models, propositions, and a priori propositions as research outcomes (Obaid, 2013; Tsui et al., 2007; Welch et al., 2011). While they search to give generalized patterns for conformity or refinement of prior theories, the peculiarities and conundrums necessary to *understand rather than explain* the undertaken issues that are ignored (Obaid, 2013; Welch et al., 2011).. To address this, managerial perspective was used to develop a deeper understanding about *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection under culture context.

3.3.1 Epistemology

Research paradigm is researcher's philosophical orientation or a conceptual lens to look at the world (Kivunja, 2017). Broadly indicated as ontology and epistemology, it guides about 'nature of the enquiry (Durrheim, 2006). Epistemology of a research may be positivist or interpretivist. Positivists employ quantitative measures to analyze causal relationships between variables to explain 'what of situation (Bernard & Bernard, 2013). Positivist approach is also termed as systematic theory of validity (Golafshani, 2003) and may help when already existing theories need to be tested and researchers attempts to disassociate from the process as much as possible (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Whereas, interpretivist approach embraces involvement and immersion of researcher's role within the research by arguing that the real world is subject to change which necessitates presence of qualitative researcher to record event before and after change occurrence (Bernard & Bernard, 2013).

Although, it has been contentious for many years as many researchers advocated positivist approach while supporting through law of generalization that assumes single universal explanation to the study of human perspectives or a social reality (Bernard & Bernard, 2013). Progressively, there was drift in research tradition where interpretivist and critical realism were focused instead of positivist strand (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This shift led to the interpretivism

that focused on understanding subjective behavior of humans that varies across individuals in contrast to given explanation of it as under positivism (Bhaskar, 1998; Ragin, 2000; 2009). Participants were carefully assigned names such as P4PK2 and P2CN1 and used generic terms comprising of meaning that participants attributed to their behaviors and this facilitated to interpret their experiences (Obaid, 2013; Tsui et al., 2007; Welch et al., 2011). Each finding was positioned as one possible alternative to know about phenomenon under study.

As also argued by various scholars, in studies conducted across cultures critically require cultural competency of a researcher to bring accurate capture and portrayal of participants' responses (Arriaza, Nedjat-Haiem, Lee, & Martin, 2015). Without having appropriate knowledge and understanding of socio-cultural and political dynamics of the research setting, researcher may misinterpret or misrepresent the data (Arriaza et al., 2015). Considering this, extra vigilance was taken to cross the cultural barriers by bringing cultural sensitivity, necessary to bring confirmability, dependability, and rigor in the research. For this, research was framed flexibly considering cultural context, cultural dimensions, and mutual respect to establish a level of cultural trust by responding in a manner consistent with cultural values of research participants (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011; Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017). Following recommendations by Burnette, Sanders, Butcher, and Rand (2014) and Wardale, Cameron, and Li (2015) for undertaking research in cultural context, the researcher learnt about broad and specific history of China through written material, also spent time with Chinese through different conferences, seminars and official platforms to interact and deepen cultural insight. This helped researcher to put a cultural lens while adopting perspective of participants and better engaging with them, thus avoided imposing culturally inappropriate frameworks. Researcher approached local authorities or HR Managers as "gatekeepers" and communicated with research participants through email, provided official identification, and authorized letter to their authorities describing the study objective to build trust. The interview settings were kept private respecting cultural norms and confidentiality was honoured and details about research objective, process of data collection, data security etc. were initially agreed between researcher and all participants.

3.3.2 Ontology

Ontology is the science of ‘*what is*’, or also termed as “experienced world” (Arghode, 2012; Golafshani, 2003). Ontology is termed as a philosophical belief about nature of a social reality, and has two senses, something that *is*, what can be known or exists and how existents exist. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Where under objective ontology, social realities may exist regardless of external impact and under subjectivity ontology, external factors may influence existence of social realities (Bryman, 2016).

Therefore, ontological focus on the study was on gathering managerial perspectives, their perception of reality and behaviors with regard to the use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection under culture context. Following Cassell and Symon (2004), the ontology of this research influenced framing of the research questions, methodology, data collection and data analysis respectively. To explain ontology, Bryman (2004) referred organization and culture as two frequently used terms in social science that differentiate positions adopted by researchers as objectivism or constructionism (Bryman, 2016). Charmaz (2000) viewed constructionism where social reality is given meaning by the interpretations of social actors that actually form it, and emphasized that objectivism is about studying social phenomenon that is external to beings who can’t influence it. In this regard, present study focused on establishing thick layers of data by interviewing 24 research participants, where 11 Chinese and 11 Pakistani managers and 2 experts took part in the study. As culture antedates people involvement and plays role in shaping their perceptions and is constantly changing due to the people who are part of forming it (Peterson & Anand, 2004), therefore, this study took constructionism approach as suited to our investigation using managerial perspectives about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection in culture context.

3.4 Data collection process

The data was collected in two phases – April till June, 2019 and August till September, 2019. In the first phase of data collection, pilot interviews with managers (working at mid to senior level) from participating organizations were scheduled for a small pilot study. Two managers, one Chinese, and One Pakistani from same organization were interviewed individually through an in-depth open-ended semi-structured interview on how they described use of informal social

networks in recruitment and selection, and are there any similarities or differences based on culture context. The pilot study was helpful to affirm, eliminate, or refine some of the meaningless or unsuitable questions, so keeping in view perception issues and selection of words as per distinct culture context of China and Pakistan, the initial ‘Interview Guide’ was revised to establish cultural integrity necessary for qualitative research in culture context (Bryman, 2004, 2016; Bryman & Burgess, 2002b; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lapan et al., 2011; Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017).

In some cases, certain questions and sub themes were removed such as “face saving in *guanxi*” because it was found not always to be the reason for use of *guanxi* by participating managers. In another instance, sub themes were included to the interview guide e., use of informational or influential *guanxi* and *sifarish* to enrich details about levels of informal social networks in final selection. The first phase of data collection was helpful to understand managers’ perceptions and attitude about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection and how they found them similar or different in cultural context. The first phase was completed by collecting data from four organizations while interviewing one Chinese and one Pakistani manager from each: three State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and one private sector organization to fully understand the context, setting, and underlying perceptions and attitudes of managers for greater generalization. The second phase enriched further insights and benefitted from first phase experience through reflexivity as much important in organizational research when interviewing (Alvesson, 2003) as it improved focus, more details and better questioning techniques with good time management of interviews (Obaid, 2013). So this phase served to further inquire managers as needed. Themes and sub themes in recruitment and selection policies and practices were reevaluated to enhance relevance.

3.4.1 Level of data collection

The data for this research was collected at three levels: individual, organizational, and societal/cultural. At individual level, the managers as experienced professional were targeted, all participants were directly involved in recruitment and selection processes. Managers’ perceptions and views were helpful as they had first-degree experience of working with members of other culture for quite a long time and besides having official appointments through

ministries, had an extensive background of publications in the context of Chinese and Pakistani culture. The cultural insight was helpful to determine significance of informal social network in recruitment and selection, evolving trends of *guanxi* and *sifarish* through IHRM and recruitment and selection literature.

At organizational level, the data collection was conducted about use of recruitment and selection policies and practices through HR Manuals. The information from organizational forms, documents i.e. Initial Interview Rating Forms, and Panel Interview Rating Forms helped to answer questions pertaining criteria of selection, factors influencing changes in recruitment and selection in cultural context. Data at organizational level was of prime significance as it helped to build a comparative analysis of informal social networks on the basis of cultural variance (Obaid, 2013). At societal/cultural level, data was collected from secondary data e.g., published articles in journals, survey and reports like The Economic Survey of Pakistan 2018-19, and various relevant reports in China and Pakistan. Another source were the experts interviewed to attain detailed insight into the culture context of China and Pakistan.

All this was aligned with recommendations of Bian (2018), suggested that managerial perspective is important as prefer hiring candidates from their personal contacts and they hold power and position of responsibility in organization. Other criteria of participation selection such as gender, education, departments, age, and experience were not used as found not to be relevant to the research objective and research questions of this study. During second phase, it was realized that a few participants had extensive exposure as much relevant to the research objectives, hence had potential to be interviewed as ‘experts’. However, use of informal social networks for permanent versus contract-based positions could have been used but HR Managers were reluctant to provide such data due to various reasons pertaining confidentiality.

3.4.1.1 Secondary data

To bring richness and potential of information, data was well supported with secondary data using IHRM, recruitment and selection, and international management, sociology, psychology, economics, and research methods related journal publications, company websites, reports, and other secondary sources of undertaken companies to establish credibility of findings from the

earlier source. Horak and Klein (2016) and Bluhm, Harman, Lee, and Mitchell (2011) emphasized use of secondary data as a feature of enhancing reliability of the primary data. Secondary data for this study was carefully collected through journals, published reports, reviews, news, surveys, books, documents of participating organizations, company annual reports on their websites and online sources both from Chinese and Pakistani database of journals. For secondary data, relevant studies were identified for literature review as electronic search was conducted for the literature while using terms typically associated with cultural difference and recruitment and selection policies and practices. Especially, the databases in the google scholar, journal databases and archives, were used to search for terms such as cross-cultural recruitment, informal social networks, GLOBE Study's nine cultural dimensions, recruitment in China, recruitment in Pakistan, Cross-cultural variance between China and Pakistan, comparison of China and Pakistan. etc.

There was general reluctance among managers regarding sharing recruitment and selection related documents as most of their HR policies and procedures were either non-existent or they were in process of customizing them or changing policies and procedures continuously as per guidelines by their global offices or recommendations by regional top management and were not sure about their effects. As stated by one of the participant, *"For some time we devise a policy then we change it again, uh, according to the business needs."* Also interviews were conducted at a time when participating companies were going through closure of short-term or early harvest of the cross-culture cooperation projects going on between China and Pakistan and few were waiting for renewal of their medium and long term contracts with the government.

3.4.2 The interview process -- selecting and accessing participants

To meet objectives of this research, data was collected using open-ended semi-structured interviews of Chinese and Pakistani Managers from ten different organizations. The inherent flexible and adaptable nature of semi-structured interviews as also highlighted by (Whipp, 1998), Alvesson (2003) Berger (2015), and Pelzang and Hutchinson (2017) allowed interviewer to inquire more questions streaming from dialogue while sustaining focus on the inquiry. Additionally, this helped interviewer to retrieve data from interviewees about issues they are well aware of and have great stories to share (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman & Burgess, 2002b).

Mostly questions mentioned in the ‘Interview Guide’ were followed and interviewees were given additional time if they had further details to share to give them feeling that their views and issues were heard (King, 2004) as it was significantly important for this study when collecting data from members of two different cultures. This method aligned with philosophical orientation and approach of the research to collect rich data resulting in dense descriptions (Obaid, 2013).

3.4.2.1 Interview Guide

According to Roulston and Choi (2018) and (Cilesiz et al., 2019) stated that there’s no specific number of questions to be asked in an ‘Interview Guide’. Warren (2002) recommended 20-30 question to include, whereas (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002) suggested 60. To maintain balance between asking just a few question to too many, this study relied on initiating ‘Interview Guide’ through pilot study before starting the data collection. Based of careful review of the literature and considering relevant themes and sub-themes, interview questions were developed for managers. To facilitate interviewee during the interview, initial questions focused broad questions as relevant to the topic under study and gradually were led to specific questions. Last questions were information seeking to close the inquiry and cover if any details left to be included (Denzin, 2009). The ‘Interview Guide’ entailed open-ended questions to gain rich insight of views and perceptions of managers, it included questions like, “How is the job information shared in your organization?”, and “What do you look for when interviewing a candidate?” Based on data from pilot interviews, the Interview Guides were revised to gain conceptual depth as conform with research approach and advocated by King (2004), (Obaid, 2013), and (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017) to stay flexible and keep modifying after starting the first interview.

3.4.2.2 Research participants

Total 24 one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Chinese (11) and Pakistani (11) managers and 2 experts working at middle to senior levels. This helped to get managerial perspective about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection from undertaken organizations. Keeping in view research requirements, research objectives and research questions of this study, purposive sampling technique was used under non-probability

sampling approach as it connects research questions with selected sample for being strategic in nature (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Obaid, 2013). This has also been supported by Maxwell (2008) and Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) to deliberately choose research participants due to the information they possess and that might not be accessible otherwise.

As methodological principle, issues of saturation significantly influence quality, meaning and process of research (Denzin, 2009; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). In qualitative research, scholars have found that in homogeneous sample, saturation was developed by twelfth interview, whereas studies based on heterogeneous sample and broader scope needed larger sample size to achieve saturation (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). Therefore, in cross-culture studies, it is recommended to undertake heterogeneous sample to compare and identify similarities and differences (Robinson, 2014). Consequently, it is suggested to consider heterogeneity versus homogeneity trade-off for research and define a sample universe coherent with research objectives and research questions and resources at disposal (Bernard & Bernard, 2013; Robinson, 2014). Furthermore, in cross-culture studies, scholars suggested a 20 to 40 interviews sample size to obtain data saturation of meta-themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Considering this 12 Pakistanis and 12 Chinese research participants were approached under purposive sampling. In all organizations, managers directly involved in recruitment and selection, particularly Talent Acquisition Managers were involved in the study. To ensure heterogeneity, managers working in different departments such as Finance, Legal & Corporate Affairs, Media and Communication, Marketing, Public Relations, and Administration, were also interviewed. In addition, Director HR, Country Manager, General Manager, and Group Heads were also included to clarify information or get further insight. Although their combination varied in each organization as per availability.

Majority of the participants were from State Owned Enterprises (SEOs) in energy sector and only 4 participants were from private sector in their current job (**Table 3-1**). The gender ratio of participants was 79% male and 21% females. The age range of 88% participants was 31-40 years, and only 3 managers were above 40 years of age, as experienced professional were targeted and mostly had post-graduate level educational backgrounds.

Characteristics	Number of interviewees	Characteristics	Number of interviewees
Gender		Education	
Male	19	Masters and above	18
Female	5	Bachelors	6
Age		Economic sector of current job	
Below 25		State	20
25–30		Non-state	4
31–40	21	Company Sector	
Above 40	3	Energy	19
		Telecom	2
		Misc.	3

Table 3-1: Demographic characteristics of the 24 interviewees

The sample size was selected keeping in view availability of representative sample, language and cultural barriers. Professional integrity, familiarity and respect for both of the cultures was endeavoured to be balanced throughout the study. Names of participants and organizations were changed due to confidentiality issues. Lastly, this study excluded sector as criteria of participation selection of interviewees to enrich data input from various sectors.

3.4.2.3 Conduct of interviews

For conducting interviews, each of the managers was individually interviewed through an in-depth semi-structured interview. Ethical concerns of any research require that participants of the study are taken into full confidence before starting process of data collection (P. J. Dowling & Donnelly, 2013). Considering this, before conducting interviews, an “Invitation for Participation” (**Appendix-I**) was sent through an email to each of the participant or to their HR Manager, and attachments in email included “Participant Information Sheet” (**Appendix-II**), “Consent Form” (**Appendix-III**) along with “Interview Guide” (**Appendix-IV**). Participants were clearly informed through each email, “Participants, Information Sheet” and “Consent Form” (**Appendix-III**) declaring that “Following code of ethics in research, all the information sought will be kept fully anonymous and strictly confidential”. Upon receiving participation confirmation and availability schedule of the participant in return email, open ended, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted. On the interview day, before start of the interview, it was ensured that participants are given prints of “Participant Information Sheet”, “Interview Guide” and “Participant Consent Form” as a refresher to give them a brief overview

of the study, its objectives and scope and expected contribution to maximize their active participation. A “Note of thanks” (**Appendix-V**) was sent to all participating manager upon completion of the interview. As asserted by Gold, Gold, Guthrie, and Wank (2002) that the concept of culture influences the concept of man (p.13) and this was accentuated by Jacobs (1979) stating that while inductively theorizing on cross-culture, it is important to consider that culture shapes individuals and their views as separate individuals and undoubtedly it continuously keeps shaping as single species. So participants of both cultures were fully informed about the study to elicit relevant responses in their culture context. The interviews were conducted at multiple locations across the Pakistan. Majority of the participants were from State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) operating in Pakistan under cross-culture cooperation projects between China and Pakistan.

“Interview Guide” (**Appendix-IV**) was followed throughout the interviews but interviewees were let to share further insight or details about the recruitment and selection practices that were not written yet were practiced such as a statement of a manager, *“I think that also is unofficial, official mode of communication should be E-mail anyway. Policies are making on WeChat, or WhatsApp, and they are changing it every day”* gave insight to the use of informal modes of communication and problems viewed, felt, faced or perceived by respective managers as participants want their voices to be heard for sensitive issues like informal sources of recruitment and selection in cross-culture context in this study (Coleman, 1988; Horak & Klein, 2016).

All of the interviews were conducted during office hours in office premises of participating managers after taking HR Department consent and were scheduled in advance to avoid inconvenience in terms of non-availability of participants. To ensure heterogeneity in sample and to generalize findings of the study, managers working in different departments were interviewed such as Human Resource, Finance, Legal & Corporate Affairs, Media and Communication, Marketing, Public Relations, Administration, and top management. Interviews with managers were approximately took 35-50 minutes duration. Data was audio-recorded after due consent of each of participants (Illing, 2014) and transcribed accordingly. All of the interviews were conducted in English language. As this method aligned with philosophical approach and inductive theorizing of the research as critical to collect dense descriptions which helps interviewees to openly provide information from their perspective as they have a story to tell

(Bryman, 2016). Inductive theorization and use of open-ended semi-structured interviews complemented data collection and provided adequate depth in qualitative description to uncover managerial perception as deemed necessary to fulfil objectives of the research.

3.5 Data Analysis and limitations of the study

3.5.1 Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study was based on three key themes e.g., overview of ‘culture’, ‘informal social networks’, and ‘policies and practices of recruitment and selection’ as elaborated through list of themes (**Table 4-2**). Firstly, ‘culture’ included sub themes of GLOBE Study’s nine dimensions of culture and how they were found to be similar or different in cross-cultural context. Secondly, theme of “informal social networks” was emerged with sub-themes of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in their cultural context. Thirdly, theme of ‘recruitment and selection policies and practices’ was recognised as Chinese and Pakistani managers work on recruitment and selection policies, developing HR manuals and provided in-depth insight to underlying views and perceptions about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection.

The transcription process was started soon after completion of interviews. All interviews were conducted in English language. As English is the official language in Pakistan and widely spoken in China especially after 1979 open door policy to internationalization. All of Chinese managers were proficient in speaking English language as they had prior experience of working in Europe and America as part of multinational scope of their companies demanded their job rotations across regions. Although, (H. Y. Chen & Boore, 2010) assert that in cross-cultural investigation, a researcher’s ability to speak and understand language of locals is important to take culturally toned approach to build credibility of researcher in eyes of research participants and the data obtained. However, there was no need to take services of a translator as all of the research participants were proficient in speaking English language as in wake of globalization, Chinese are the largest English-learning population in the world (Khan, Waheed, Chengwen, Butt, & Ahmad, 2019; Yajun, 2003). In Pakistan, Urdu is national language but English is official working language and largely spoken and understood (Rasool & Winke, 2019; Shamim, 2011).

Data was audio-recorded digitally for transcription. Transcribed data was put into codes, as process of coding helps to analyse qualitative data while taking them apart to see what they yield before putting back data in a meaningful manner p.156 (Y. Chen et al., 2011). This facilitated systematic thematic data analysis while building structure of the qualitative data as aligned with research questions. It is advised to assign code to each of the interviewee to identify transcription at data analysis stage (Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Stuckey, 2014, 2015; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). After assigning codes to each of the 24 interviewees, 'bottom-up' way inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012) was initiated which according to Pope, Ziebland, and Mays (2000) and Saini and Shlonsky (2012) is a systematic process to identify, organize and provide meaning to recurring patterns while highlighting underlying sentiments, views, perceptions, embedded in theme. This helped to identify views and perceptions of Chinese and Pakistani managers' about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection. Each of the transcription was given careful review ensuring scrutiny line by line for assigning relevant codes.

Based on objectives of research, the interview data was analyzed focusing on content than discourse features (Obaid, 2013). This aligns with views of Halcomb and Davidson (2006) to undertake one selected method to transcribe interview that harmonize with research objectives. The '*iteration*' process was run in parallel by reviewing initial interviews and their transcripts to keep relevance to emerging themes by intertwining between theory and data as significant in grounded theory (Bryman, 2004; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman & Burgess, 2002b). This process included making additions and deletions to the interview guide as many of the interviewees were not initially comfortable directly speaking about use of informal ties in recruitment and selection due to fear of being taken wrong as corruption or violation of policies. The data was analyzed without the aid of computer software like NVivo to ensure that not a single manager's views and perception about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection are missed at any point and to avoid forceful creation of categories. Additionally, the interpretivist considerations of this study demanded flexible organization and coding of the data as study also focused identifying possible similarities and differences using GLOBE Study nine cultural dimensions.

3.5.2 Limitations

Despite of rigor and systematic research design adopted to ensure adherence to quality research practices, methodological limitations were present in this study, which certainly may propel the stream of research to explore further avenues in informal social networks. Previous studies have focused *guanxi* from top executive perspective, whereas potential effects of *guanxi* between recruiting managers remains unknown. Therefore, using interpretivist epistemology provided in-depth insight through managerial perspective. However, qualitative nature of the inquiry lacked objective causal findings, usually examined through quantitative data collection methods like surveys, multi-case design could have provided objective details about managerial perspective about *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection and also pinpointed any differences and similarities between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context. Additionally, use of mix-methods along with qualitative methods may enhance generalizability and reliability of the study while combining techniques from both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). How Chinese and Pakistani managers perceive about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection has not been explored previously, hence this qualitative study seemed appropriate to initiate inquiry which may guide future studies to opt for multi-level (including employees), mix-methods considering firm size to generalize and see implications across societies.

A number of other constraints governed this study, as only Chinese and Pakistani managers working in Pakistan (Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, KPK provinces) were approached as research participants due to availability of participants and budget constraints as it was not possible to travel to China to collect data in their culture setting. However, in ideal circumstances it would have been the best option to collect data from Chinese companies which have not yet started operating in Pakistan. Furthermore, methodological limitation lies where data has been analyzed without use of any software like NVivo. Despite of limitations associated with exploratory research design of this study, the findings of this study provided in-depth insight to the academics, practitioners, and students on informal social networks in recruitment and selection across other societies. Furthermore, studying use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection extended knowledge in IHRM literature and recruitment and selection literature.

3.6 Ethical issues, values and practical considerations

According to Myers (2019) ethics are of great significance and need attention during entire research process. During each step of research, it is ethically very important to provide each research participant with relevant information to set foundation of the study (Ryen, 2011). Therefore, utmost caution was maintained on each step of this research that all standards of ethics are duly fulfilled and intact. Complete confidentiality and anonymity of the participating managers was ensured by coding each of the interviewee. To prepare participants and to enhance their interest in study, a proper “Invitation for Participation” (**Appendix-I**) was sent through an email to each of the participant or to their HR Manager. All participants were provided with details of the study objective using “Participant Information Sheet” (**Appendix-II**) to make them feel comfortable and develop rapport with interviewer. To build thematic analysis as required for this research, interviews required to recording and consent of each participant was duly taken using “Consent Form” (**Appendix-III**). As all of the participants were informed about anonymity and confidentiality of information before and during conducting interviews. On day of interview “Participant Consent Form” was signed by participants to mark their consent to be part of this study. The “Interview Guide” (**Appendix-IV**) was shared with all participants before and during participating in research, to mark it as informed choice.

Importance of sensitivity towards cultural values and practical concerns was strongly maintained as they determine the quality of input much required for qualitative investigation in cross-cultural setting (Arriaza et al., 2015; Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017). Through self-reflection, effort was made to eliminate any bias in the study. Though Bryman is of the view that there is increased awareness now about limits of objectivity in social inquiry and more and more awareness that researchers may allow their values to influence (Bryman, 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman & Burgess, 2002b). To this, R. Dowling (2005) suggests that subjectivity may be minimized by making the participant aware of objectives, hopes, and expectations of the researcher which might influence how they perceive. The study also started by sharing aim and objectives of study that researcher aspired to accomplish while addressing identified gaps through IHRM and recruitment and selection literature urging to study use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection from managers’ perspective in culture context. Plagiarizing research work is heinous crime and keeping this in view, it was avoided by

generating Turnitin report. The privacy of email ids was ensured by having all communication through official email ID of the university.

3.7 Measures of qualitative research

In view of many academics, qualitative research has ontological and epistemological considerations and often lacks scientific rigor and quality to qualify as an academic research (Sarma, 2015). Such contestations are based on misconceptions because of the lack of understanding about paradigmatic differences between quantitative and qualitative research, its reliability and validity, and due to scarcity of adopting good qualitative research practices (Holloway & Todres, 2007). For this, there is a different criteria to establish scientific rigor and quality in qualitative work i.e. adhering to protocols and procedures in data collection to enhance authenticity and trustworthiness (Amankwaa, 2016), ensuring transcription close to verbatim (Poland, 1995), triangulation (Bush, 2007; Flick, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Therefore, in the first phase, this study strictly maintained procedures and protocols when approaching participating organizations, scheduling interviews, and followed code of ethics in research, all the information sought was kept fully anonymous and strictly confidential. In second phase, follow up meetings were arranged as required. To enrich data, managers were not only asked about their own perceptions about informal social networks but also data regarding recruitment and selection policies and practices of their organizations was also sought to have detailed and thick descriptions. This may greatly benefit future researchers studying informal social networks in culture context. To ensure dependability, data collected from Chinese and Pakistani managers was duly recorded with soft files of each transcript.

While conducting an integrative review and setting new directions for future research on Chinese *guanxi*, C. C. Chen, Chen, and Huang (2013) summarized that research methodologies in empirical investigations at micro-level studying *guanxi* have been following three major research designs; interviews, surveys, and semi-experiments. He argued that paper and pencil questionnaire comprise of questions about relevant *guanxi* constructs without mapping out social networks of the focal person (Chen et al., 2004; Chen & Peng, 2008; Su, Yang, Zhuang, Zhou, & Dou, 2009; Warren, Dunfee, & Li, 2004; Xin & Pearce, 1996). Nadeem and Kayani (2017) also noted that due to lack of research on informal social networks in Pakistan, there's need to

develop an in-depth understanding about historical role of *sifarish* in business setting of Pakistan. Apart from advantages and disadvantages of research designs and methodologies used to study *guanxi* as informal social networks, their appropriateness majorly depends on the research questions inquired (C. C. Chen et al., 2013) which might even require to use different methods in combination e.g., interview and network recall (Xiao & Tsui, 2007), semi-experiment with survey (Chen et al., 2004).

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to compare and understand the similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. To establish in-depth understanding, using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture, the study attempted to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context. This chapter identified possible connection between themes of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) used by Chinese and Pakistani managers, recruitment and selection policies and practices to identify gaps in policy versus practice, and further using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture identified distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

Next sections provide details on substantive research findings as aligned with research questions in chapter one and integrated through conceptual framework in chapter two. Following sections discuss (i) summary and key findings, (ii) types of informal social networks, (ii) recruitment and selection policies and practices, (iii) using GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture, similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context as recruitment and selection methods are specific to culture. Final section offers conclusion of the research.

4.1 Summary and key findings of the study

Summary of key findings is presented first and then findings are discussed in succeeding sections. Research revolved around three key themes of the study as depicted through list of themes in **Table 4-1** – informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*), recruitment and selection (policies and practices), and culture context.

This study revealed strong prevalence of weak ties by Chinese managers and strong ties by Pakistani managers in recruitment and selection on the basis of multiple reasons. Firstly, *guanxi* is a considered as utilitarianism (purpose based) in principle, with loose emotional tendencies influencing recruitment and selection. Whereas, based on certain background of network members, *sifarish* networks are majorly immutable (cause based) and narrowly draw on family,

tribe, caste, creed, region, based ties that exist naturally. Secondly, drawing on heterogeneous groups, informal social networks of *guanxi* were more accessible to outsiders with loose emotional tendencies influencing recruitment and selection. Whereas, narrowly drawing on homogenous groups, informal social network of *sifarish* was found more exclusive predefined by birth (e.g., tribe, caste, creed, geography) with less freedom to build diverse social network structures. This implied that, Pakistani managers use strong ties for recruitment and selection than weak ties, hence “strength of strong ties” (Jaeyeol, 2000, p. 340) seemed more realistic notion than the theory of weak ties which were considered advantageous for coordinating activities according to Granovetter (1983).

Thirdly, in practice, findings showed that Chinese and Pakistani managers were considerate about to what extent informal social networks to be used in recruitment and selection. Taking managerial perspective helped to take firsthand account of managers as they hold power and position of responsibility in their organizations and generally tend to prefer hiring candidates from their personal contacts as also suggested by Bian (2018). Chinese managers recognized informal level exchange of job information to acquire job of choice and regarded it positive part of their social support system, the core of which are also social, cultural & institutional factors. With modern day technology, job information is exchanged using different mobile apps and social media platforms. Whereas, influential level use of *guanxi* was reported by majority of Chinese managers as violation of rules and laws of selection, though a small segment still found it almost impossible to refuse *guanxi* at times. Despite of agreeing to strong prevalence of *sifarish*, many of the Pakistani managers indicated progressive change in trend due to increasing market competition and multinational ventures. Pakistani managers were considerate of using *sifarish* for competent and deserving candidates fulfilling criteria of the job thus balancing its influences on selection decision at *influential level*. With change in current government, Pakistani managers reported that merit-based recruitment system is progressing in the country, yet they maintained strong loyalty towards familial and organizational groups to get job of choice. Both managers recognized positive side of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks to expedite the recruitment process while giving predictable business relationships. However, other factors like socio-economic, unemployment, inflation, poverty, corruption,

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), lack of institutional support, political influences, and social support systems also seemed to influence changes in use of informal social networks.

Moreover, using GLOBE study's nine dimensions of culture, the study found some similarities (e.g., on performance orientation, assertiveness orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, and power distance) and distinctive differences (e.g., future orientation, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarianism, and uncertainty avoidance) between *guanxi* and *sifarish*. Study found that high power distance influences performance orientation and greatly influences when recruiting and selecting a candidate. The original contribution of research lies in comparatively exploring similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Unfolding *guanxi* in a non-Chinese environment i.e. Pakistan also marked its strength which may be termed as 'invasive informal networks'. This study extended IHRM literature on informal social networks in recruitment and selection across societies.

4.2 Informal Social Networks

Based on findings of this research, *guanxi* and *sifarish* were found most widely used informal social networks by both Chinese and Pakistani managers, yet they influenced in their own unique ways. Many of the interviewed managers mentioned during their interviews that unemployment and high competition in China and Pakistan creates a zero-sum situation to get a job of choice. As many people compete for limited job opportunities and one is better off if s/he has informal ties. This was significantly reported at entry level positions where two candidates having similar qualification and relevant experience may have different selection outcome based on informal social ties. Key findings of this study reflected that despite of both managers being from seemingly collectivist societies, "strength of strong ties" (Jaeyeol, 2000, p. 340) seemed more realistic concept for Pakistani managers than the theory of weak ties which were considered advantageous for coordinating activities according to Granovetter (1983). Moreover, using GLOBE study, this exploratory research identified distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

4.2.1 *Guanxi*

While defining *guanxi*, Chinese managers used words such as personal connection, special relationship, special *guanxi*, personal *guanxi*, working *guanxi*, good reference, good for business and used it to be close to people. However a senior Chinese recruitment manager with extensive years of experience of recruitment and selection in cross-culture work environment gave details about *guanxi*, he commented,

“Chinese culture is totally different. Many people often say that if you don’t have good *guanxi*, you’re not going to get anywhere and I think there’s some truth to that. I think *guanxi* is nice. It’s formed through common activities like eating, sports, games, buddy or something and affects a lot when it comes to bring people in organization.” (P1CN1)

Despite of strong prevalence of *guanxi* in recruitment and selection, majority of the interviewed Chinese managers confirmed that *guanxi* serves the person by affecting selection decisions. Since *guanxi* is built on mutual trust and reciprocal favors over a long-term period, majority of the Chinese secure job through *guanxi* and at times it’s almost impossible to refuse it or do business without it. Upon having a vacancy, first of all Chinese managers traditionally rely on giving favors and hire people from their social networks rather advertising in newspaper or outsourcing to employment agencies because of credibility and trust issues. He commented,

“For example, if we are looking someone for a job, the first step is that we ask our friends. Do you have friends working in some company, would they like to come or not. Only *guanxi* decides which company you choose, that’s very special for this.” (P3CN1)

Contrary to this, a few Chinese managers involved in recruitment and selection carefully disagreed that *guanxi* may help in final selection, rather regarded *guanxi* as a kind of reciprocal action which informally provides job specific information only. A progressive shift was noted when a few of the interviewed Chinese managers reported use of merit based and market oriented recruitment and selection systems, and focused job specification more than personal contacts to sustain profits than friendships. A good interview performance and traditional *guanxi* was considered the most effective blend in finding the right person for the job. However, Chinese managers would hesitate to develop informal social ties if these are detrimental to the

business interest, as influence of *guanxi* will be limited, or resisted in large multinational organizations as they adapt standardized procedures of screening and selection for qualified candidates to stay competitive in global market. According to a Chinese manager, importance of *guanxi* to large organizations has been waning since China has opened-up to the world outside and their reform policies are at advanced stage. He commented,

“I provide an analogy, if you have good *guanxi*, it could perhaps provide you, you know with an access to get an interview but it wouldn’t get you the job ultimately, especially in large multinationals as they are becoming global players.” (P2CN1)

The problem with *guanxi* is that it’s multi-dimensional and hence aspects of *guanxi* are considered in various contexts, yet it is urged to balance positive versus negative sides of it. *Guanxi* is not necessarily source of corruption, rather deeply rooted in Chinese Confucian values of their culture which emphasizes commonality, mutual trust, respect and social harmony. *Guanxi* might have different meaning for Western oriented managers and others might perceive it as bribery, still it remains important to multinationals venturing in China. Whereas in eyes of Chinese managers it might be totally acceptable and important to cultivate mutual trust, respect and long-term relation. A Chinese manager commented,

“*Guanxi* is often viewed by foreign MNCs as some corruption or a mysterious Eastern force that can move mountains. Actually its rooted in Confucian values, its multidimensional relationship between two parties, who know each other for some time, willing to help and to do business, give some face, and favors that’s all *guanxi*.” (P4CN1)

However, it is cautioned about *guanxi* that it might result badly as favoritism to members within *guanxi* networks when hired person might not be capable thus compromise competency by supporting *guanxi* member at the cost of business efficiency. Sometimes in case the other introduced person might not be trustworthy, credible or reliable. Also it’s tiresome, requires time and money to cultivate *guanxi* as it requires a lot of resources and effort to establish inter-dependence between two parties to make it long-lasting and productive association. Even if a foreigner speaks in Mandarin, still familiar contacts will be required to get close to a *guanxi* network. It might be difficult to establish *guanxi* as foreigners might get confused or irritated

from this long process of cultivating reciprocity and might get stuck and find it inefficient. Time and continence is important to cultivate *guanxi* relation to ensure proper positioning for future contacts as Chinese recognize people in different categories family, friends, foes. So, instead of trying quick wins through exchange based relationships, true partnerships are based on long-term *guanxi* ties which start with building basic rapport with potential partner, win relationship by mutually exchanging favors and finally creating a deal that is beneficial to all. Findings also reflected that various socio-economic, institutional and political factors have promoted complexity in use of *guanxi* as informal social network in recruitment and selection. In terms of fundamental orientation, *guanxi* carries society-spanning constructs and draws on diverse ties (heterogeneous groups) hence more loose emotional propensities influence recruitment and selection in organizations.

4.2.2 Sifarish

Pakistani managers majorly described *sifarish* using words such as reference, special recommendation, personal connection, social obligation, *sharam*, *lehaz*, *murrawat* to achieve ends on basis of informal social connections. To define *sifarish* and its prevalence, a Pakistani manager commented,

“Who-knows-who plays role in almost every corner of the world. *Sifarish* is called a reference, or social networking. If you want to be successful in life you have to network, which is the hip word, it is happening all over more so in sub-continent.” (P1PK2)

Mostly *sifarish* in recruitment and selection is intended to influence and pressurize the decision maker. *Sifarish* may be used when organization immediately need to fill a vacancy on ad hoc basis and due to pre-existing rapport and loyalty it may offer better retention prospects. In case of internal recruitments, *sifarish* works to maintain existing cordial relationships besides immediately providing a potential human resource. A Pakistani manager stated,

“Based on experience, a good reference CV helps to immediately get the right person at the right time to make right decision. It’s cost effective, with greater talent retention. Secondly, it’s quick, especially if a candidate is good and available within right away.” (P5PK2)

Contrary to this, a few of the interviewed Pakistani managers regarded *sifarish* as a kind of exchange of social reciprocation which only informally disseminates job information across *sifarish* network. Common sources of recruitment were word of mouth, although newspaper advertisements were placed, still resumes were also collected using informal social contacts. In addition, job criteria and competence, organizational selection procedures were in place to bring rigor and transparency to the selection procedure. Pakistani managers perceived it is a privilege to have access to job information although final selections were made based on set criteria. A Pakistani manager remarked,

“I knew we had advertised a vacancy, so we just hired a person whom I referred from my contacts, we scrutinize him and found talented. I think if a referred person is from trustworthy contact, competent enough with good educational background and experience, we should consider him. As our company will grow with his experiences.” (P7PK2)

However, it is cautioned to look at use of *sifarish* in recruitment and selection in context of other factors such as uneven distribution of job opportunities, unemployment, inflation, competition, and poverty that causes people to find a reference or higher social contact to start a job. *Sifarish* was found mostly used at entry level more than senior level. A Pakistani manager stated,

“If we have a position like, assistants or drivers. We get reference from employees and because of unemployment and competition, many people are already looking to start a job here, so we usually find it easily. For higher management or technical positions it is difficult to find through reference only and we have to advertise it. (P6PK2)

However, it is warned to recruit and select people merely on basis of *sifarish* as sometimes managers oblige a friend or a relative based on caste, sect, creed, and region or because of strong reference they can't refuse without considering the consequences. Although a progressive shift has been observed under influence of globalization, modern urbanization and adaptation of best practices in organizations, still *sifarish* continues to prevail. A few of the interviewed Pakistani managers indicated presence of other factors such as socio-economic factors, political instability, bureaucratic structure, poverty, inflation, and competition. A Pakistani manager expressed,

“Incompetent candidate may get through *sifarish*, yet have to give job to nephew, *zaat*, *bradari* and *halqa* person even if incompetent. This disturbs our workflow. Without *sifarish* you can’t get things done, informal influences are significant in selection. At times we have to hire based on list provided by MPA or MNA to start our project there. (P5PK2)

Findings revealed that *sifarish* ties are accessed to achieve ends on the basis of social networks e.g., employment, business contract, school admission and serve to amplify chances of final selection and offer more stable career path. Pakistani managers appeared to rely more on strong ties that are emotionally close and more narrow and exclusive and based on homogenous groups (relations based on cast, creed, region, tribe etc.) than the weak ties. Hence, Pakistani managers regarded strong ties more deeply, emotionally bonded, and implicit and balanced unethical side of *sifarish* by matching through job criteria, and selection procedures.

4.2.3 Managerial perspective towards use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection

Results found that majority of the interviewed Chinese managers perceived *guanxi* as an efficient way of findings suitable candidates for job through ‘relational fit’. Despite of significant prevalence of *guanxi*, Chinese managers were considerate of to what extent to use *guanxi* and balanced it through rule of law and policy to operate globally. One Chinese manager stated,

“*Guanxi* relationship is to get close to do business, a trust relationship, which at times may fall into area of anti-bribery, commercial bribery laws, especially for MNCs. These areas are problematic and we cannot over look them.” (P5CN1)

Whereas, as part of adaptation of the best practices, a few of the participating Pakistani managers perceptions showed progressive shift as they indicated that policies and laws govern selection decisions and modern day managers are responsible enough to promote merit-based system than solely relying on tribe and *bradari* (cast) etc. as criteria of selection. A Pakistani manager commented,

“With globalization and awareness, after a decade there will be less employment on basis of *sifarish*. Back in 20 years, some village people preferred job based on cast, creed, tribe, *baradari* or voter. Now, its legal matter to hire based on contacts only.” (P7PK2)

Pakistani managers were considerate to maintain ethical justification to *sifarish* regraded informational level exchange of job information as ethical and at influential level influencing selection decision as unethical. Some of the interviewed Pakistani managers practiced merit-based selection system and abide by rule of law rather relying on notions of nepotism and favoritism as it violates merit and regarded it as positive. Modern day organizations have rigorous selection procedures including subject tests, behavioral tests to select more compatible match for job and organization. A Pakistani Marketing Manager said,

“It’s fine if people exchange job related information and we select if candidate has the competency to perform. But a lot of people use "*sifarish*" saying it’s for their genuine tasks. I want to clarify that your genuine tasks do not require *sifarish*.” (P9PK2)

Findings revealed that both Chinese and Pakistani managers apprehended about to what extent or level the use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) is to be made in recruitment and selection. Informational level use of informal social networks was regarded more ethical than the influential level one. Besides collectivist culture orientation, managers were considerate of other factors such as corruption, poverty, uneven distribution of job opportunities, unemployment, competition in job market, lack of policy compliance, political influences, fairness and procedural justice etc. The inductive theorizing and use of open-ended semi-structured interviews allowed to complement data with adequate qualitative description to uncover managerial perspective as aligned with research objectives.

4.3 Recruitment and Selection

Findings established that the key design of HR recruitment and selection policies was somewhat similar across organizations, however difference was observed in practices. As managers’ make recruitment and selection decisions based on organizational policies and laws of the country, this section examines recruitment and selection and gap between policies versus practices. Furthermore, sub-themes of policies covered policy compliance and recruitment and selection

strategy, and for practices it included conduct of interview, sources of recruitment. This favorably helped to elicit underlying perceptions of managers about use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection and why do these network exist at the first place. Findings revealed that merit-based recruitment and selection system along with informational level use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) may create a hybrid system to benefit from social capital that employees bring with them and benefit organization.

4.3.1 Recruitment and Selection policies

Majority of the interviewed Chinese and Pakistani managers confirmed presence of written policies in their organizations. Managers were asked to elaborate their recruitment and selection policy as written in their HR Manuals. However, despite of formal recruitment and selection policies, both managers were reported particular preference for network-based selection rather solely relying on job advertisement. Although Chinese managers didn't agree to make *guanxi* as part of their recruitment and selection policy and stated it as a personal matter, thus maintained gap between written policies versus actual practices. Whereas Pakistani managers agreed to regularize use of *sifarish* in recruitment and selection policy if it meets certain criteria of selection in practice. Majority of the interviewed Chinese managers mentioned informational level use of *guanxi* to exchange job information only and found it positive reciprocation as part of social support. A Chinese manager commented,

“I think *guanxi* is good. But in certain way it doesn't affect a lot the interviews and general application process. It is a kind of that person can get certain information.” (PICN1)

Likewise, Pakistani managers elaborated informational level use of *sifarish* and compliance to written recruitment and selection policies, formal recruitment and selection process (subject tests, behavioural tests, initial interview, and panel interview) for selection as per written criteria right from the start ensuring documentation at each step. A Pakistani managers emphasized,

“We have strict policies for recruitment, although some organizations don't even have proper HR manual but we still ensure compliance at every step including country laws and even go beyond that. Though we tell others if there's a vacancy yet also look for experience and qualification.” (P7PK2)

The study explored that both managers used *guanxi* and *sifarish* to hire on ad hoc basis to accelerate the selection process. Informal social networks were mostly used to select at entry level, whereas job advertisements were placed for senior level and technical positions due to scarcity of talented resource. Likewise, majority of Pakistani managers mentioned that their recruitment process only starts with recruitment request received from department head. There was little workforce planning and forecasting for future demands at the backend. Findings revealed that both managers reported compliance to recruitment and selection policy differently. Though both ensured that most of the recruitments were in basic compliance with employment legislation as per policies or laws yet in practice stated preference to select from *guanxi* and *sifarish* networks. Chinese managers were found more agile, flexible and responsive in policy change as per business demands than Pakistani managers looking for strict compliance, step-by-step documentation. A Chinese Marketing Manager commented,

Yes, we have recruitment policy. We always obey country's laws and regulation and our company policies but actually I don't think that our policy is strict. Sometime our policy is flexible. Like no matter how old a person 20, 30, 50, that's okay.” (P5CN1)

The study revealed that overall both managers used adhoc recruitment and selection strategy. However, their usual criteria after *guanxi* or *sifarish* was to shortlist a candidate in compliance to specified job specification (e.g., qualification, working history, and communication skills etc). Recruitment and selection policies didn't mention informal social networks in addition to formal sources of recruitment to attract, identify and select the best suited person for a job.

4.3.2 Recruitment and selection practices

Although majority of Chinese and Pakistani managers confirmed presence of written recruitment and selection policies yet gaps were observed based on use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in practice. Regarding formal conduct of interviews, a Chinese managers added,

“It's very important to have *guanxi* even before interview. If we know you, you come here for interview very easily. We don't check CV, you come. If you want a job in an organization, you need *guanxi*, you should be close to their people.” (P2CN1)

Most of the interviewed Chinese Managers opened up and revealed interesting details regarding importance of *guanxi* even prior to and during the conduct of interviews. Job seekers and managers extensively relied on *guanxi* networks in practice to screen the right person and strength of *guanxi* significantly influenced on chances of getting shortlisted and selected. A few of the participating managers were considerate that besides *guanxi*, the person should also be screened for job criteria and culture compatibility. CVs did not matter much to majority of the Chinese managers as in practice they screened based on *guanxi*, however if asked they looked at CV to find missing facts, different companies names that candidate has worked with. Additionally, during conduct of interview, they preferred good character (positive minded), internationalized technical knowledge, competencies, and cultural compatibility. However, panel interviews were used to avoid confrontation and to reach harmony in selection decision. A Chinese manager elaborated,

“Depends on work level, mostly one interview, sometime if requires more evaluation step like panel interviews. Then our senior boss and senior HR finalizes candidate.” (P4CN1)

On the other hand, Pakistani managers preferred somewhat formal process (subject tests, behavioural tests, initial interview, and panel interview) for selection. Study found that strong informal reference through top management ensures predictability to secure job of choice. Majority of Pakistani managers preferred to conduct panel interviews to reach social harmony, favour in-groups and to avoid confrontations after selection. While mentioning conduct of interviews, a senior Pakistani HR Manager stated,

“Informally, we forward CV to the manager who is actually hiring. In cases when *sifarish* is very heavy, so we have to create that position.” (P5PK2)

Based on findings, the study revealed that collectivist orientation of both cultures greatly influenced use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection. Although *guanxi* and *sifarish* were used addition to specified criteria of selection through policies, whereas practices weighted final selection based on informal ties.

4.5 Culture context

Findings revealed that Chinese and Pakistani managers' collectivist culture orientation was found embedded differently though it might seem similar from outside. Chinese managers made recruitment and selection based on weak ties as relational fit count a lot to know each other through *guanxi*. A very prominent culture difference was reported by Chinese managers that they considered themselves as easy-going in selection criteria yet strict on discipline, and respect for others with open mind regardless of differences. As strongly remarked by a Chinese Commercial Manager,

“Chinese culture is open, internationalized and easy-going. Chinese like to get along with other people, other countries and people also like to do business with Chinese because we are easy-going. So I think a big, deep difference is that our mentality is different.” (P5CN1)

Contrary to this, majority of Pakistani Manager agreed that being an agrarian economy and under British colonial rule for long, *sifarish* narrowly draw on strong ties. Pakistani managers' selection based on family, tribe, caste, creed, region resulted in high degree of homogeneity among members of *sifarish* networks which needs to be looked in its unique context than comparing it to Western management practices. A Pakistani manager elaborated,

“Pakistanis are fundamentally religious and close to family which in international media many people get an idea that we are aligned to corruption side. This is what separates us from European or Chinese culture. We are not very open and flexible.” (P7PK2)

Findings showed that majority of Chinese managers considered *guanxi* from relational perspective. Drawing on heterogeneous groups (weak ties), *guanxi* is more accessible to outsiders with loose emotional tendencies influencing recruitment and selection. Whereas, Pakistani managers paid more attention to common factors that naturally existed among people like caste, creed, and geography for final selection. Hence, *sifarish* (strong ties) seemed to draw on homogenous groups with less freedom to form diverse group structures. Pakistani managers added it's a very different working environment, close knit familial ties and considered religious work ethics to make fair dealings, fulfilling agreements and promises.

4.6 Guanxi and sifarish comparison based on GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture

The GLOBE study was outcome of a ten-year study of society, culture, leadership and organizational attributes differences across 62 countries. Based on extensive findings of GLOBE Study, this research elaborated following nine dimensions of culture including: performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (House et al., 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, et al., 2006; Nadeem et al., 2018) to identify similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

4.6.1 Performance Orientation

Majority of the interviewed Chinese managers reported *guanxi* low on performance orientation practice as Chinese managers overlooked CV, standards of selection and favored *guanxi* based recruitment and selection to find a relational fit and to reach group harmony. *Guanxi* was viewed as a gateway to employment and candidates were preferred from weak ties (heterogeneous or diverse groups). A Chinese Vice President emphasized,

“If you really want to get job, you need *guanxi*. You cannot avoid it. Yes! Bring somebody you know because its soft power to Chinese to ensure decisions are made in harmony. If you don't know anyone, you can ask your friends to help.” (P2CN4)

Whereas a shift was noted in case of *guanxi* at large organizations or multinationals as Chinese managers reported high on performance orientation value with emphasis on compliance to written recruitment and selection policies, job specification, experience and criteria of selection as necessary to operate across societies. A Chinese General Manager explained,

“In large organizations or multinationals, there's really no mystery to get job, if you have education power, diverse technical knowledge, good learning ability, diverse cultural backgrounds, hands on experience, you're going to be successful. That is very basic fundamental for employment.” (P5CN1)

Likewise, majority of Pakistani managers reported low on performance orientation practice by favouring selection from *sifarish* networks. Drawing on homogenous groups (e.g., familial, tribe, creed, region, community) their informal social networks influenced final selection of candidates. Being an agrarian economy, local landlords and influential people informally use *sifarish* networks for selection of their referred candidates. One Pakistani Manager commented,

“Here in Pakistan some influential people, local landlords informally use *sifarish* and we can’t refuse. So we have to create a position that organization does not require.” (P7PK2)

Whereas Pakistani managers reported high on performance orientation value and put emphasis on standards of selection to avoid wrong or unnecessary appointments. Adding further, yet they emphasized to use criteria of selection in addition to *sifarish* to make it a win-win situation. A Pakistani manager elaborated,

“Even if I recommend someone, the objective is not only to help them find job but also identify what kind of skills and abilities they can offer. Even if you are appointed based on *sifarish*, you can’t perform as long as you don’t satisfy job requirements.” (P5PK2)

A gap in policy versus practice was noted in performance orientation practice of both *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection, where both Chinese and Pakistani managers preferred to select from their informal social networks, yet marked high on performance orientation value. This implies that though recruitment and selection is made based on informal social networks still there’s strong desire at society and organizational level for performance orientation.

4.6.2 Assertiveness

Both *guanxi* and *sifarish* reported low on assertiveness orientation practice as both managers expected to reach on one harmonized selection decision based on panel interview method. Both managers didn’t favor confrontation or aggressiveness toward use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection. Instead of equity, performance and competition through criteria of selection, both managers valued affective relations, reciprocal actions, cooperation and ties of trust through *guanxi* and *sifarish* networks for predictable selection decisions. One of the

Chinese managers reflected that selection decisions through panel interviews help to avoid confrontation at individual level. He remarked,

“For entry level most of the time, one interview is okay after test but for middle or senior management it’s panel interview to ensure decisions are made in harmony. We, our senior boss and senior HR finalizes candidate.” (P2CN1)

Likewise, Pakistani managers didn’t prefer to be assertive in their decisions, rather preferred to continue as a society that values cooperation, social harmony, and avoids confrontation in final selection. A Pakistani Administration and HR Manager said,

“I don’t want to hire anyone based on *sifarish*, but sometimes we have to because we have to launch our factory there.” (P8PK2)

Assertiveness orientation reflected policy versus practice gap, as both *guanxi* and *sifarish* were found low on assertiveness orientation practices yet marked high on assertiveness orientation value which marked desire to be more assertive oriented as organization and society. Panel interviews were used to reach mutual consensus and cooperation in final decision making.

4.6.3 Future Orientation

Findings show that majority of the interviewed Chinese managers reported low on future orientation practice and high on value as *guanxi* and *sifarish* were used for adhoc recruitment and selection. Instead of relying on lengthy and time taking process of advertising, screening and shortlisting the best match, Chinese managers preferred favoring candidates from *guanxi* ties and found it efficient in terms of saving time, money and resources. Whereas a few paid more attention to time and prior planning, setting budget for important position in project. A Chinese Manager said,

“We get money every year from public, World Bank, from government, and plan. Maybe they want to invest in for example, solar station, wind station, they have plan. So, we communicate with them, understand their requirements and deliver. Same we’ll give them proposal for the important jobs in the project.” (P3CN1)

Furthermore, Pakistani managers reported low on future orientation practice and high on value as they favoured candidates from strong ties (homogenous groups) of trust and loyalty. They had strategic plans and policies for long-term existence of organization with a section of HR. Mostly *sifarish* was used for entry-level positions which helped to fill vacancy on adhoc basis rather relying on systematic assessments and procedures. Majority of them adhered to ad-hoc recruitment and selection strategy and their formal recruitment process only initiates when a line managers send them recruitment request to fill a vacancy. A Pakistani manager added,

“Our recruitment process only starts when a department managers submits his recruitment request form. Then we look whether job is a replacement or new.” (P7PK2)

Hence, the gap was reflected between future orientation practice and value of *guanxi* and *sifarish* which marked that there is strong desire for future orientation both at society and organizational level. Both managers desired to document future plans for required headcount in their organizations, yet find it difficult to neglect adhoc practices resulting in use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* ties in recruitment and selection especially at entry level. Though both managers reported strong desire to plan ahead for senior level or technical experts based on subject knowledge and they had to advertise in newspapers because of lack of immediate access and availability through *guanxi* and *sifarish* ties. This implies that instead of indicating short-term orientation, both managers may consider long-term aspects of recruitment and selection to not only design but also implement recruitment and selection plans to reflect on how their behaviour will have consequences for future.

4.6.4 Humane Orientation

Chinese managers reported strongly high on both humane orientation practice and value at societal and organizational level. Drawing on Confucius values, they put emphasis on *guanxi* based humane elements of being caring, kind supportive to each other in recruitment and selection. Therefore, job information was first disseminated across weak ties e.g., family, friends, and members of community. A Chinese Marketing Manager stated that,

“We Chinese care about relationships. Having a vacancy, we usually request our staff to refer through *guanxi* for example, family, friends, neighbor, and community. In case the referred person does not match required profile, we’ll search for more *guanxi*.” (P5CN1)

Pakistani Managers marked high on humane orientation practice and value and favored *sifarish* not only to informally disseminate job information across strong ties but also to ensure final selection. Underlying values of strong in-group collectivism encouraged kindness, care, support and sympathy for candidates from *sifarish* networks.

“People love to approach influential people like saying “I am your brother”, “I am your cousin”, “I am your voter” and that influential person considers request under *sharam*, *murrawat*, or *lehaz*.” (P7PK2)

Besides just putting emphasis only on performance orientation of a candidate, both managers demonstrated care and supported *guanxi* and *sifarish* closely. This implies that both *guanxi* and *sifarish* ties strongly considered personal informal networks and showed care, felt sympathetic and extend a helping hand to their weak and strong ties as part of social support in different stages of recruitment and selection.

4.6.5 Institutional collectivism

Study revealed that majority of the interviewed Chinese managers reported strongly high on institutional collectivism practice and value. Which implies that institutional collectivism is valued by both organization and society in form of harmonized groups as part of broadly integrated Confucius values and managers prefer to serve interests of *guanxi* network members. Group work is considered important while setting recruitment and selection goals, and decisions are made through panel interviews. A Chinese manager commented,

“All things are decided in a group, group works. Mostly for senior level positions, we interview including our senior boss and senior HR to finalize candidate.” (P2CN4)

A significant shift was noted during the study that Pakistani managers reported low on institutional collectivism practice and high on value. Both at organizational and societal level,

Sifarish was found narrowly drawing on homogenous groups that are emotionally close and based on certain background of network members (e.g., family, tribe, caste, creed, region) that exist naturally. Pakistani managers did not prefer collective actions and collective distribution of resources, therefore had strong preference for candidates from strong ties e.g., family, sect, caste, region, tribe etc. Hence while making selection, decisions were more influenced by strong ties of *sifarish* than ties with co-workers at workplace.

“In Pakistan, religion and family orientation affects way of doing business and may affects when selecting a candidate. But the basic thing is, our religion drives everything. Religion might be a ground especially for some minorities.” (P5PK2)

Hence, most of the interviewed Chinese managers reported *guanxi* ties significantly high on institutional collectivism practice and value where harmony was reached among group members though panel interviews, organization and society encouraged to collectively distribute resources and take collective actions. *Guanxi* (based on weak ties) looks after job needs of each other like a family in exchange of loyalty and gives considerable weight in hiring decisions. Whereas *sifarish* based on strong ties showed narrowed inclination of Pakistani managers towards family, sect, region, tribe etc. based ties rather ties at work for final selection.

4.6.6 In-Group Collectivism

Study found that *guanxi* was reported significantly high on in-group collectivism practice and value as Chinese managers took high pride in loyalty towards in-group members. Being member of in-group is considered very important as *guanxi* is considered more important for relational fit than job specification or criteria of selection. Family members and friends expect special treatment to a referred candidate and Chinese managers feel it is essential to reciprocate. A Chinese Training Manager elaborated,

“We Chinese prefer working in small familiar groups, we call it small circles, that is crucial to the harmony and group wisdom for our business success. (P5CN1)

Likewise, drawing on strong ties, *sifarish* high on in-group collectivism practice and value and is accepted by Pakistani managers as loyalty to in-group members. Loyalty, pride and cohesiveness

with society and family was considered important. Pakistani managers particularly prized loyalty and exchange of favors to families more than organizations. A Pakistani manager stated,

“The criteria upon which we recruit and select people is who is competent enough and who knows who. People coming through *sifarish*, they actually have connections in different organizations.” (P8PK2)

This implies that being high on in-group collectivism practice and score, Chinese managers normally prefer weak ties (heterogenous groups) and select candidates belonging to their *guanxi*. Though a slight shift was noted in managers from large organizations or multinational responsibly considering organizational policies and rules of law along with *guanxi*. *Sifarish* favoured candidates from their own informal networks (homogenous groups) and at time Pakistani managers put their in-group members ahead of organizational policies (e.g., nepotism, favouritism) and affective relations with family are more important.

4.6.7 Gender Egalitarianism

Findings revealed significant contrast on gender egalitarianism practice and value between Chinese and Pakistani managers in recruitment and selection. Both Chinese and Pakistani managers shared different views on gender inequity while reflecting on equal depiction across organization at all levels. Chinese managers reported low on gender egalitarianism practice and high on value and preferred uniform approach towards both genders through policy. One Chinese manager said,

“We don’t have diversity policy, we think, every job is uniform. Because our country China has uniform culture so we have woman and man as uniform... whatever you are, man or a woman, no matter.” (P5CN1)

Contrary to this, *sifarish* marked low on gender egalitarianism practice and high on value. *Sifarish* gave preferential treatment to men and represented a male-dominated society with advertisements mentioning selection based on gender based roles and discriminating based on gender and less involvement in decision making. One Pakistani manager remarked,

“Pakistan is basically a male dominated society. Women are not very open in Pakistan and not much allowed to interact with men. There is dress code to work, some want to cover head. We live in a society where men are in charge and mostly trusted by top management. In my experience, our men don’t know what to do with a strong woman.” (P7PK2)

Sifarish didn’t minimize gender inequality across all level even though policy for ‘gender diversity’ was present in some organizations. Gender based selection by Pakistani managers’ involved religious interpretations for job roles, stereotypes and dress code.

4.6.8 Power Distance

Study found that both *guanxi* and *sifarish* were high on power distance practice and value. The authority gets in the way of final selection decisions and juniors unflinchingly defer to their seniors in command to decide. Both had strong respect for seniors’ recommendations and were obedient to hierarchy. A Chinese manager added,

“If you come from recommendation may be some seniors’ interfere, you get hired even if you are not professionally strong because we can’t refuse them.” (P2CN4)

Likewise, a Pakistani managers affirmed,

“They come from strong reference, we call it heavy *sifarish*. If politician of that area will say you have to hire all that village, so we have to hire. We have to stay there like five or six years so we have to manage a little bit with them.” (P5PK2)

This implies both *sifarish* and *guanxi* networks show obedience to superiors and accept unequal distribution of power at organizational and societal level. Both managers showed differentiation to selection recommendations from those with or without power. Although with modern urbanization and increasing globalization, a few Pakistani managers reflected high on power distance value with desire to reduce power distance and promote participative approach in final selection decision.

4.6.9 Uncertainty Avoidance

Findings showed that *guanxi* reported low on uncertainty avoidance practice as they relied on informal social networks for recruitment and high on value by considering consistency, order and structure. Chinese managers reported high on uncertainty avoidance value, which marked desire for predictability, consistency in structure and process, and realization of lack of implementation of long-term recruitment and selection planning as part of improving at societal and organizational level. A Chinese manager added,

“Often time managers are so busy. They are not necessarily going to get your interview scheduled or to give you time of the day to understand what you’re looking for, rather they rely on their trusted contacts to have a final say for selection to avoid risks.” (P2CN4)

Whereas, *sifarish* was used to avoid risk of wrong appointment by relying on familiar and trusted social contacts to select a candidate for the job. Majority of Pakistani managers preferred using panel interview method for census and predictability in final selection decision in presence of all concerned authorities. Hence, *sifarish* marked low on uncertainty avoidance practice and high on value at societal and organizational level. One Pakistani manager stated,

“We use panel interview! Final. We don’t go for 4-5 interviews. We just do with one panel interview, all authorities agree, we select.” (P5PK2)

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter served to understand findings pertaining use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection in culture context. Based on emerged findings, this study answered why managers use *guanxi* and *sifarish* at the very first place and highlighted perceptions of Chinese and Pakistani managers about use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. In terms of a few similarities, the presence of informal social networks in recruitment and selection was found common across the two undertaken societies. Where informal social networks tended to be *informative* and *influential* and were built through closed social networks and maintained through reciprocal actions and ties of trust over a period. In terms of differences, managers exhibited different approaches with regard to compliance to recruitment and selection policies

versus practices. While opting for hybrid recruitment and selection approach favouring merit-based recruitment and selection along with *guanxi* and *sifarish*, organizations may benefit from informal social capital employees bring with them while joining the organization. Finally comparison of *guanxi* and *sifarish* on GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture identified unique similarities and differences in culture context.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

Major changes have taken place in the recruitment and selection policies and practices of modern day organizations in the past couple of decades. Globalization and increasing cross-culture interaction has greatly influenced how businesses operate today. With increase in urbanization, and growing multinationals (Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015), modern day organizations have progressively shifted towards adaptation of international best practices for competitive advantage and economic success (Nadeem & Kayani, 2019). However, according to unemployment rate in Pakistan at 5.8% (Labour Force Survey, 2017-18) and in China at 4.24% (in urban areas) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020), marks high competition in job market thus creating a zero-sum situation to get a job of choice. Surprisingly little has been explored about *sifarish* as informal social network in recruitment and selection, whereas abundant research has been done on *guanxi*. Both informal social networks, *guanxi* and *sifarish* continue to prevail in recruitment and selection and related business activities despite of internationalization, and modernization. Given the increasing importance of Pakistan as a potential market for foreign investment and growing role in business activities at international level, surprisingly very little has been explored about the use of informal social networks (e.g., *sifarish*), whereas abundant research has been done on *guanxi* in recruitment and selection.

This research aimed to compare and understand similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. To enrich the study, managers' perspective about use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection were given voice. As Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, and House (2006) advised to use managerial perspective at micro-level as both the consumers and the producers of leadership. Furthermore, encapsulating multi-level analysis, at organizational level, information about recruitment and selection policies and practices were used to thicken evidence based details and build authenticity of the study (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013; Ployhart, Schmitt, & Tippins, 2017). At macro-level, using culture context (Budhwar & Debrah, 2001; Sven Horak, 2014; Sven Horak & Taube, 2016; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017) helped to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in culture context.

Discussion in this chapter highlights substantial findings of the study as also incorporated through the conceptual framework presented in chapter two. This section discusses findings of this study as they conform to present stream of literature on international management, IHRM and recruitment and selection, and extend knowledge on use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection across societies. To sum up, the sections include (i) *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks, (ii) recruitment and selection policies and practices, and (iii) similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* using GLOBE Study's nine cultural dimensions (iv) changing trends in *guanxi* and *sifarish*. The final section presents conclusions to the study.

5.1 *Guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks

Through comparative approach, the study explored similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection based on culture context. Unfolding *guanxi* in non-Chinese environment (i.e. Pakistan) marked its strength. Drawing on *weak* ties (heterogeneous groups with transactional relationships and loose emotional tendencies), *guanxi* was more accessible to others with loose emotional propensities influencing recruitment and selection (P. S. Adler & Kwon, 2002; Granovetter, 1983; R. D. Putnam, 2000). Whereas *sifarish* narrowly draw on homogenous groups (e.g., family, emotionally close community with deeply embedded morals) that are emotionally close and based on certain background of network members (e.g., family, tribe, caste, creed, region) that exist naturally (P. S. Adler & Kwon, 2002; Kwon & Adler, 2014; Lee, 2009).

Using MSSD (Most Similar Systems Design) (Teune & Przeworski, 1970) under inductive research strategy served to identify distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context. This also opened interesting avenues to benefit from potential interplay of *guanxi* with *sifarish* in recruitment and selection. This resonates with Minkov (2018) and Y. Lee and Kramer (2016) who argued that to better understand the cross-culture difference, HR practitioners are essentially required to understand the country culture before hunting the talent. Furthermore, Sven Horak and Taube (2016) viewed that local employees and foreign managers should know about significance of affective tie mechanism deeply ingrained in the culture with likelihood to persist in future.

5.2 Recruitment and selection policies and practices

The study highlighted that pertaining use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection, policy versus practice gaps existed in undertaken organizations. Drawing on weak ties (heterogenous groups), Chinese managers had written recruitment and selection policies, job specifications and criteria of selection, yet in practice strongly preferred to be flexible and select based on relational dimension of *guanxi*. Unlike western context, *guanxi* emerged as distinctively rooted in values of Confucian relationalism familial or kinship relations established through voluntary association are essence of collectivism and humaneness in Chinese society (Gao, Ren, & Miao, 2018). *Guanxi* is distinctively developed through informal activities (i.e. drinking, eating, dancing, sports, theatre, movie, gifts, traveling), and majority of interviewed managers considered it as the basic requirement for recruitment and selection. Whereas, narrowly drawing on strong ties (homogenous groups), Pakistani managers desired strict compliance to written recruitment and selection policies and standards of selection, yet in practice favored *sifarish* for adhoc selection to save time, cost and resources. Studies also suggested that *sifarish* tends to prefer candidates from mutually common cast, tribe, creed, sometimes violating organizational interests and considering strong recommendation, or a phone call of influential without even interview as also highlighted by Islam (2004) and Nadeem and Kayani (2017).

Guanxi played significantly at informational level exchange of job information, screening and short-listed, interview, as Nolan (2020) termed it hiring based on 'relational fit' stemming from ties of trust, tie strength and loyalty. Drawing on weak ties, *guanxi* bridged between a job seeker and an employer by providing job related information which IHRM literature termed as informational *guanxi* (Brown, Setren, & Topa, 2016; Sven Horak & Klein, 2016; Yulei Weng & Hao Xu, 2018). Some Chinese managers reported use of influential *guanxi* as violation of rules and laws of selection which resonates with ethical considerations in use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection (Gibb & Zhang, 2017; Hanser, 2002; X. J. W. Huang, employment & society, 2008; Khavul, Bruton, & Wood, 2009; Ledeneva, 2009; Park, Kim, Cheng, & Lee, 2019; Zhu, 2018). Whereas, *sifarish* was inclined to select candidates based on strong ties of family, caste, creed, region, till influential level (Khan et al., 2019). *Sifarish* focused on disseminating job information both at informational and influential level. Although transparent, unbiased and merit-based recruitment and selection systems have not fully appeared

in Pakistani, therefore *sifarish* was used in addition to specified criteria of selection (S. Ali, 2015; S. Uzair, Majeed, & Shakeel, 2017).

Though a limited number of progressive manager confirmed mention of “employee referral programs” and word-of-mouth for promotion and recruitment and selection which also resonated with existing literature (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ahsan, 2018; Islam, 2004; Mahrukh Khan et al., 2019; Nadeem & Kayani, 2017). Shamsuddin (2015) argued that employee referral is the most frequently used source of recruitment especially for entry level positions. This also confirms that ‘referral system’ based on informal social networks of *guanxi* and *sifarish* prefers trust over competency (task based vs person based) in recruitment and selection (Abosag & Lee, 2013; Ang & Tan, 2015; Annen, 2003; D. Y. Lee & Dawes, 2005; Peng, Wang, & Jiang, 2008). Though J. H. Kang, Ling, and Barclay (2019) cautioned that while informal social networks bring in trustworthy people, it is questionable if the recruitment process is transparent, merit-based and fair and it seems that a compromise is reached between hiring the most trustworthy person versus hiring the most able person.

Study highlighted policy versus practice gaps that undertaken organizations of majority of the interviewed managers had written HR policies and adhered to basic laws of the country as normative orientation yet majority of the managers didn’t cover tacit or informal practices (i.e. *guanxi* and *sifarish*) influencing recruitment and selection. This conforms with findings of McDonnell, Lavelle, and Gunnigle (2014) that while venturing across culture, organizations ought to not only adopt global best HR practices but also equate it through adaptation of local tacit practices in host context as influenced by culture (H. Kang & Shen, 2017). This implies that hybrid form of recruitment and selection may emerge where both managers may combine cultural preferences and key features of modern merit-based recruitment and selection to benefit from informal networks employees bring with them while joining the organization.

5.3 Culture context: Similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on GLOBE Study’s cultural dimensions

To enrich details, the research used GLOBE Study’s nine dimensions of culture to explore distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context.

Although *guanxi* and *sifarish* are deeply embedded in collectivist culture in distinctive ways, the study recognized major similarities on performance orientation, assertiveness orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, and power distance. Whereas differences were identified on future orientation, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarianism, and uncertainty avoidance as summarized through **Table 5-1**. Ranking high on institutional collectivism and in-group collectivism practice and value, Klasing (2013) asserts that Chinese managers prefer selecting who show dedication to in-group members and they preferred candidate not to be selfish about their own individual interests or career goals. Whereas both managers depicted low on performance orientation practice and high on performance orientation value with desire to execute strict compliance to policies instead of practicing adhoc recruitment to meet immediate business needs as also confirmed by Ahsan (2018). Thus, while adapting to international best practices, both managers need to integrate them internally to ensure consistent set of practices and values that impacts the way society defines success to adapt to external challenges while managing through in-group collectivism which resonates with existing literature (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009; Nadeem et al., 2018).

Moreover, Chinese and Pakistani managers reported low on assertiveness orientation and were found non-confrontational and valued group harmony over individual interests (Ma & Jaeger, 2010; Yulei Weng & Hao Xu, 2018). Likewise Pakistani managers reported low on uncertainty avoidance practice and value to reach consensus in decisions through panel interviews including all stakeholders, or authorities, thus also proving as non-assertive to avoid confrontation after decision has been made (Nadeem, de Luque, & Organization, 2018). Study also highlighted strong similarity between *guanxi* and *sifarish* on high power distance practice and value where both Chinese and Pakistani managers showed obedience to hierarchy. They regarded top management as epitome of authority and accorded *guanxi* or *sifarish* from senior and influential managers for selection and promotions were based on seniority. Most of the selection decisions were finalized by top management as also confirmed through various studies (Barbalet, 2017; Islam, 2004; Ramaswami, Huang, & Dreher, 2014; Ruwanpura & Hughes, 2016).

Strong similarity between *guanxi* and *sifarish* was observed on humane orientation practice and value. Chinese managers considered well-being of their *guanxi* ties and mutually supported to find job. Likewise, Pakistani managers often used *sifarish* to narrowly favour candidates from

strong ties (common caste, creed, tribe, region etc) though a few reflected *sifarish* for marginalized, and deserving which resonated through findings of Nadeem and Kayani (2017). Shamsuddin (2015) argued that Pakistani society is restrained and strict and notions of religion override everything and managers tend to select based on religious values, norms, and kindness.

Chinese managers marked on average of future orientation as they practiced adhoc recruitment through *guanxi* at entry level and planned for senior level. Whereas, *sifarish* didn't help in long-term planning rather it was used as adhoc recruitment strategy. Chinese managers flexibly responded to changing trends in practice by making exceptions, as they strategically planned about identification of new markets which resonated with findings of N. Huang, Zuo, Wang, Cai, and Wang (2019) about Chinese managers being flexible and future oriented to plan as per market demands. This implies that both managers may plan long-term aspects by not only design but also implement recruitment and selection plans to reflect on how their behaviour will have consequences for future (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2009; Nadeem et al., 2018).

Major differences were observed on gender egalitarianism, as *guanxi* didn't work based on gender. Chinese manager marked low on gender egalitarianism practice and high on value as they encouraged inclusive approach in making women part of workforce yet restrained their presence at top management positions based on gender (Krys et al., 2018; Marano, Sauerwald, & Van Essen, 2019; Yang, 2016). Pakistani managers perceived women's career choices, right to continue job after marriage, right to maternity progressively with more inclusive policies (gender equality policy, day care facility, extended maternity leaves, come back career campaigns) supporting their representation in organization across levels and roles which marked strong desire at organizational and societal level to encourage participation of women in workforce across levels.

Table 5-1 Comparison of the most significant differences and similarities between *guanxi* and *sifarish* using GLOBE study's culture dimensions

GLOBE Dimensions	Study's	CN	PK	Comments
Performance Orientation practice		▼	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> overlooked CV, standards of selection and favored weak ties based selection for relational fit and to reach group harmony. Whereas, drawing on homogenous groups (e.g., familial, tribe, creed, region, community) <i>sifarish</i> favoured strong ties for final selection. Both exhibited high on value with strong desire to be performance oriented at both societal and organizational levels.
Performance Orientation value		▲	▲	
Assertiveness Orientation Practice		▼	▼	Both <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> were found low on practices yet reported high on value which marked desire to be more assertive oriented. Panel interviews were used to reach mutual consensus and cooperation and to avoid confrontation in final decision making.
Assertiveness Orientation value		▲	▲	
Future orientation practice			▼	<i>Guanxi</i> reported on average on practice as managers document future plans for required headcount in their organizations, yet found it difficult to neglect adhoc practices resulting in use of <i>guanxi</i> . Whereas <i>sifarish</i> reported low on practice and high on value with desire to be future oriented.
Future orientation value		▲	▲	
Humane orientation practice		▲	▲	<i>Guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> reported strongly high on practice and value both in society and organization. Managers take care of ties well-being and favored candidates from weak and strong ties respectively for selection.
Humane orientation value		▲	▲	
Institutional collectivism practice		▲	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> (weak ties) strongly high on institutional collectivism practice and value, whereas <i>sifarish</i> reported low on institutional collectivism practice and high on value. While making selection, decisions were more influenced by strong ties of <i>sifarish</i> than ties with co-workers at workplace.
Institutional collectivism value		▲	▼	
In-group collectivism practice		▲	▲	<i>Guanxi</i> was reported significantly high on in-group collectivism practice and value. Chinese managers took high pride in loyalty towards in-group members. Likewise, drawing on strong ties, <i>sifarish</i> high on in-group collectivism practice and is accepted by Pakistani managers as loyalty to in-group members.
In-group collectivism value		▲	▲	
Gender egalitarianism practice		▼	▼	Major differences identified, <i>guanxi</i> didn't work based on gender. Chinese manager marked low on practice and high on value, encouraged inclusive approach yet restrained women at top management. <i>Sifarish</i> reported low on practice and high on value which marked Pakistani managers' desire through progressive initiatives of day care, maternity leaves on gender egalitarianism in recruitment and selection.
Gender egalitarianism value		▲	▲	
Power distance practice		▲	▲	Both <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> were strongly high on practice and value with obedience to authority, favored recommendations from hierarchy, both focused selecting a 'relational fit' over 'job-fit'. There was tolerance for unequal distribution of power.
Power distance value		▲	▲	
Uncertainty avoidance practice		▲	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> reported high on uncertainty avoidance practice and value which marked strong desire for predictability, consistency in structure and process, and realization of lack of implementation of long-term recruitment and selection planning as part of improving at societal and organizational level. <i>Sifarish</i> was used to avoid risk of wrong appointment by relying on familiar and trusted social contacts
Uncertainty avoidance value		▲	▼	

5.4 Managers' perceptions towards use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection

Use of inductive approach helped to uncover underlying managerial perspective about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish*. Pakistani managers considered *sifarish* as ethical if it is used at informational level to share job related information only and unethical if used at influential level influencing decision and violating merit. Nadeem and Kayani (2017) and Islam (2004) also cautioned not to undermine affective ties in recruitment or to accept *sifarish* as ethical and urged to look at it from ethical relativism in culture context.

Chinese managers urged to look at multidimensional aspects of *guanxi* instead of merely labeling it unethical and carefully framed it in culture context. Similarly Leung and Barnes (2019) and Dunfee and Warren (2001) also encouraged to look at *guanxi* from normative perspective which may benefit foreigners by establishing and strengthen their affective ties through traditions of reciprocation and get performance advantages when working across cultures. Geng, Mansouri, Aktas, and Yen (2019) rightly termed *guanxi* like informal networks as *double-edged sword* which needs a balance work to maximize benefits in recruitment and selection.

5.5 Changing trends in *guanxi* and *sifarish*

As today's organizations are competing globally, the study highlighted that a prominent shift may emerge from only *guanxi* and *sifarish* based recruitment and selection to hybrid form combining both cultural preferences of managers with modern key features of best practices. This may minimize selection of incompetent people through *guanxi* and *sifarish* and incorporate merit-based recruitment and selection system through hybrid approach to outperform in market and to support bottom up administration approach (Aho & Duffield, 2020; Jackson, 2017; Chen, 2017; Kang, 2013). While comparing *guanxi* and *sifarish* on GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture, both Chinese and Pakistani managers marked differently on practice versus value of some cultural dimension which marks though in practice it might not be supportive yet strong desire is there at societal and organizational level. For instance, a gap in policy versus practice was noted low on performance orientation practice yet high on value, which marked that both Chinese and Pakistani managers favoured *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection, yet strongly desired to have performance orientation. This is inferred that though recruitment and selection is made based on informal social networks still there's strong desire at society and

organizational level for performance orientation. Which requires both managers to shift value towards performance-oriented factors in recruitment and selection in practice other than *guanxi* and *sifarish*. Use of informal social networks also opened debate on ethical versus unethical practices in recruitment and selection where *guanxi* may diminish if other party found contradicting Confucius values in practices (Dunfee & Warren, 2001; Sven Horak, 2018; Leung & Barnes, 2019). Similarly *sifarish* too has been viewed from dark versus bright and ethical versus unethical perspective by considering ethical relativism (Nadeem & Kayani, 2017).

5.6 Research Contribution

5.6.1 Academic Contribution

The original contribution of research lies in exploring role of informality (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection using comparative approach and its embeddedness in culture context, which has not been studied before. It was interesting to note that *guanxi* unfolded in a non-Chinese i.e. Pakistani environment and this marked the strength of *guanxi* even in a non-Chinese environment that may be termed as ‘invasive informal networks’ (Kluemper, Mitra, & Wang, 2016). Firstly, using GLOBE Study’s cultural dimensions, this research provided managers’ with comparative views about use of *guanxi* and *sifarish* across societies. This study extended current stream of IHRM and recruitment and selection literature on informal social networks while identifying how ‘referral systems’ work in recruitment and selection in emerging markets (i.e. Pakistan, China) and seem to work even in non-Western environment. Use of MSSD identified distinctive similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* which may serve managers to effectively collaborate and communicate when working across culture and may open interesting avenues for potential interplay of *guanxi* with *sifarish* in recruitment and selection.

5.6.2 Managerial Contribution

Use of managerial perspective served to take responses as both the consumers and the producers of leadership, which is significantly critical to know about quality and strength of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) (Javidan, House, et al., 2006). Also, the study identified distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* in recruitment and selection in cultural context, which has not been examined before.

This study uniquely provides managerial perspective and presents possible implications of selection decisions, policies and practices when venturing globally through joint-ventures or strategic alliances, as managing culture aspects is critical to project success. In addition, managers perspective is crucial and relevant to implementation recruitment and selection policies as also aligned with research questions of this study. Furthermore, building on findings of this exploratory study as also argued by C. C. Chen et al. (2013) urged managers may need to take interest in employment process to have more strategic and flexible hybrid approach towards removing barriers in positive use of informal social networks in recruitment and selection. Such initiatives may help managers to devise recruitment and selection policies with minimum gaps when implemented in practice and be agile when operating across societies (Guan, 2017).

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study proposes that hybrid form of recruitment and selection approach may emerge where both Chinese and Pakistani managers may combine cultural preferences and key features of modern merit-based recruitment and selection to benefit from informal social capital employees bring with them while joining the organization. Informal social networks may benefit managers along with merit-based system at informational level by creating a hybrid recruitment and selection system. Rooted in collectivist culture, *guanxi* draws on heterogeneous groups (weak ties) and hence is more open, flexible and accessible to outsiders with loose emotional propensities influencing recruitment and selection. Whereas, *sifarish* narrowly draws on homogenous groups (strong ties) with less freedom for diverse structures, hence “strength of strong ties” seemed more realistic notion for Pakistani managers. To enrich, the study recognized major similarities on performance orientation, assertiveness orientation, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, and power distance. Whereas differences were identified on future orientation, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarianism, and uncertainty avoidance. Original contribution of this research lies in comparatively exploring use of informal social networks (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) in recruitment and selection in culture context. The study recommends future studies to take larger sample size and use multi-level analysis including employees and different research methods (multi-case study, mix-methods) while considering other factors (political and socio-economic) for conceptual precision and triangulation of empirical findings across other societies.

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Appendices

Appendix-I

Date
Participant Name
Title
Organization Name
Address

Subject: Invitation for Participation in Research

Greetings Mr./Ms. _____,

I hope you find this email in the best of your spirits.

Referring our telephonic conversation this day, I am writing to request permission to seek research participants from your organization as part of my thesis requirements. The study is titled as “**A cross-cultural comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection**”. This requires participation of employees with Chinese and Pakistani origin with experience of working at middle to senior management level in your organization.

Following code of ethics in research, all the information sought will be kept fully anonymous and strictly confidential. The data will be collected through 20-45 minutes in-depth semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Enclosed is “Interview Guide” to facilitate prior review. Please let me know if any further query.

Your response is awaited.

Sincerely,

Amina Munir
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NUST Business School (NBS),
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Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: A cross-cultural comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection

Interviewer : Amina Munir, Student MS HRM, NUST Business School, NUST, Islamabad.

Overview: In recent times, organizational management literature on the mechanism of managing recruitment and selection using informal social networks is increasingly emerging with a rich history in background. However, in the past, management of recruitment and selection using informal social networks has received less attention especially when compared in cross-culture context. In Pakistan, there are many cultural factors that play significant role in landscape of recruitment and selection and use of *sifarish* is an act to achieve the end through use of social networking or personal connections favoring selection on a job. In China, use of *guanxi* widely refers to drawing on established personal social connections in recruitment and selection. This research aims to compare and understand how informal sources of recruitment and selection (*guanxi* and *sifarish*) influence recruitment and selection based on culture variancee.

Research Objectives: This research is aimed to meet following objectives;

- To compare and understand how and why informal social networks are used by Chinese (*guanxi*) and Pakistani (*sifarish*) managers in recruitment and selection in cultural context
- To find distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context

Other Information: As research participant, you would be expected to take part in an in-depth semi-structured one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interview will take 20-45 minutes. All information provided, will be audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis and all transcriptions will be kept safe. All identified information including extraneous details and identities mentioned by you will be kept anonymous and confidential and no information regarding your identity or personal details will be shared even when published through academic journal or presented at a conference. Special care will be taken that during the research you are not subjected to any discomfort, pain or risk. Finally, your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question or may withdraw at any time without mentioning the reason.

Participant Consent Form

Research Title: A cross-cultural comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal social networks in recruitment and selection

Interviewer : Amina Munir, Student MS HRM, NUST Business School, NUST, Islamabad.

Participation Type: Volunteer

Please read this “Consent Form for Participants” and mark your signatures as a gesture of your willingness to participate.

I have received my own copy on “Participant Information Sheet” that I have carefully read and thoroughly understood. “Participant Information Sheet” informs about objective and nature of the study and what I would be asked to do as a ‘Participant’. I understand that all the information sought will be kept confidential even when published through academic journal or presented at a conference. I am given opportunity to inquire questions and discuss about “Participant Information Sheet” with the researcher.

Participant’s Statement of Consent

I _____ hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this research and that my interview may be audio-recorded. I also agree to the terms described in “Participant Information Sheet”. I understand that there will be no benefit directly from participating in this research and I can refuse to answer any question or may withdraw from this study at any time without giving any reason. (Kindly mark your consent by signing herewith).

Participant’s Signatures:..... Date:.....

Researcher

I _____, as the researcher hereby confirm that I have discussed the “Participant Information Sheet” in detail with the participant and I believe that ‘Participant’ is giving informed consent for his participation in the research.

Signed:..... Date:.....

Interview Guide

Date: _____ Respondent: _____

Title: _____ Company: _____

Introduction: (5 minutes)

Background information about the interviewer and institution.

1. Explain the purpose of the research: To compare and understand how and why informal social networks are used by Chinese (*guanxi*) and Pakistani (*sifarish*) managers in recruitment and selection in cultural context. Also to find distinct similarities and differences between *guanxi* and *sifarish* based on culture context
2. Participation in the research:
 - Interview (20-45 minutes)
 - Follow up emails
 - Relevant company reports/documents
 - Candidates/job application websites
3. Discussion about anonymity: All collected data will be kept anonymous and highly confidential and used for this research purpose only. Furthermore, information regarding participating organizations, their employees, markets and individual names will be replaced to ensure anonymity of their identities.
4. Permission regarding choices on how to record the data while conducting the interview e.g., interview recording device, notes writing etc. to be taken. Additionally, a 'Participant Information Sheet' along with 'Consent Form' will be signed by the interviewee(s) to take part in this study.
5. Outline the interview sequence. This is an in-depth semi-structured interview and uses open ended questions. In the start,
 - First section will cover a brief overview of national culture.
 - In second section, I'll discuss current policies of recruitment and selection in your firm.
 - Third and last section, I'll cover actual practices of recruitment and selection.
 - Incase you cannot understand any particular question/issues we can mutually discuss and clarify it.

1.0 Section One - Overview of Culture (10 Minutes)

I would like to ask you a few questions about your national culture.

- 1.1 Please tell about your experience of working with Chinese/Pakistani?
- 1.2 What are the key values of Pakistani/Chinese culture you observed so far?
- 1.3 How do these key values affect the way of their doing business?
- 1.4 Which of these affect their recruitment and selection?
- 1.5 Based on working with Chinese/Pakistanis, what are the main differences or similarities you see in the recruitment and selection from China/Pakistan?

2.0 Section Two – Specific to Policies of Recruitment and Selection (15 Minutes)

Moving onwards, I would like to ask about your firm's policies of recruitment and selection.

- 2.1 Please tell about country laws that affect your recruitment and selection policies?
- 2.2 Are there written recruitment and selection policies in your organization related to;
 - 2.2.1 Recruitment and Selection Process
 - 2.2.2 Diversity
 - 2.2.3 Job Description (JDs)
- 2.3 How much strictly do you feel recruitment and selection policies are being implemented?
- 2.4 How informal sources of recruitment and selection are covered in the HR policies?
- 2.5 Do you see recruitment and selection policies different for locals versus expats?

3.0 Section Three - Practices of Recruitment and Selection (15 Minutes)

In this last part, I would like to know about your practices of recruitment and selection.

- 3.1 Now please tell what is your overall recruitment strategy?
- 3.2 How is the job information shared in your organization?
- 3.3 Can you please tell what criteria do you consider important while shortlisting a resume?
- 3.4 What do you look for when interviewing a candidate?
- 3.5 Please elaborate whole process how recruitment and selection is conducted in your firm?
 - 3.5.1 What do you consider as important?
 - 3.5.2 What do you considered as right / wrong?
 - 3.5.3 How much important is body language?
- 3.6 How informal sources of recruitment and selection are used incase of expats?
- 3.7 How important is it to have informal sources of recruitment along with formal ones in your organization?

- 3.8 Could you please point out the main advantages or disadvantages for recruitment and selection through informal sources?
- 3.9 While wrapping up this conversation, would you like to add something that you think I might have missed but you see as important to be included especially while comparing different cultures?

Date

Participant Name

Title

Organization Name

Address

Subject: Note of Thanks

Dear Mr. Ms. _____,

Please accept my sincere thanks for the excellent support provided by you and participating in the study titled as “**A cross-cultural comparative analysis of *guanxi* and *sifarish* as informal sources of recruitment and selection**” as part of my thesis requirement at NUST Business School, NUST, Islamabad, Pakistan.

The success of this interview was substantially due to the quality of data, time and facilitation, provided by you. Kindly accept this humble appreciation and thank you for your generosity and goodwill. I earnestly request you to continue efforts to reduce the gap between industry-academia through research and development.

Sincerely,

Amina Munir

Student MS HRM

NUST Business School (NBS)

National University of Science & Technology (NUST)

H-12, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Cell: 0321 4920290

Email: amina.mhr16@nbs.nust.edu.pk

URL: www.nust.edu.pk

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

英文姓名 Name in full		中文姓名 Name in Chinese		相 片 Photograph
出生日期 Date of Birth		出生地點 Place of Birth	未婚 / 已婚 Single / Married	
國籍 Nationality	籍貫 Native Place	性別 Sex	年齡 Age	
住宅電話號碼 Home Telephone No.		香港身份證號碼 H.K. Identity Card No.		
申請職位 Position Applied		希望待遇 Salary Expected		
現時住址 Present Address				
學 歷 EDUCATION				
學校名稱 Name of School	Dates attended From 由	就讀日期 To 至	程度及文憑名稱 Standards reached & Certificates obtained	
能講語言或方言 Spoken Languages / Dialects		能寫文字 Written Words		
以往就業詳情 PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT				
商號名稱 Name of Organization	職位 Position Held	Date 日期 From 由 To 至	離職理由 Reason for Leaving	
現時職業 Present Occupation	現時僱主名稱 Present Employer	現時僱主地址 Address of Present Employer	現時月薪 Monthly Salary	服務時間 Length of Service
個人 Special Skills				
有否刑事犯罪記錄	有 / 否	原因:		

申請人簽署

Signature of Applicant

日期

Date:

Initial Interview Evaluation Form

Applicant Name: _____

Date: _____

Position Being Considered: _____

Department: _____

Current Salary: _____

Expected Salary: _____

1. Interviewer Name: _____

Interviewer Designation: _____

2. Interviewer Name: _____

Interviewer Designation: _____

S #	Rating Criteria	Comments	Rating out of 5
1	Qualification		
2	Career Focus		
3	Relevant Experience		
4	Past Employment Record		
5	Flexible Attitude		
6	Team Player		
7	Customer Conscious (Internal & External)		
8	Strong Self Belief		
9	Effective Communication Skills		
10	Good Negotiation Skills		
11	Work Organization		
12	Stress Handling Capacity		
13	Market Awareness (Local & International)		
14	Vendor Management		
15	Target/Deadline/Result Oriented		
16	Initiative / Resourcefulness		
17	Learning Attitude / Open To Change		
18	Computer Skills		

Final Comments: _____

Total Score: _____

Benchmark Score: 60% (Minimum)

Total Obtained Score: _____

- Selected
- Regret
- On Hold

1-Sign Off: _____ 2-Sign Off: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Job Application

Please complete the form below to apply for a position with us.

Full Name *

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Current Address

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City

State / Province

Postal / Zip Code

Please Select ▾

Country

Email Address *

Phone Number

Area Code

 -

Phone Number

Applying for Position *

▾

Start date

Month

Day

Year



Upload Resume *

No file chosen

CANDIDATE INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

Candidate Name:	Job Title:	
Date of Interview:	Interviewer Name:	
Competency	Candidate Rating *	Job Relevancy
Communication: expresses thoughts clearly in writing and verbally; projects positive manner in all forms of communication; responds diplomatically.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Problem Solving/ Decision Making: demonstrates ability to make decisions; involves others as appropriate; demonstrates ability to resolve issues.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Building Trust: demonstrates ability to keep commitments and meet deadlines; exhibits integrity and honesty with colleagues and customers; demonstrates ability to be open to views of others; takes responsibility for own actions in a conflict resolution.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Conflict Resolution: Candidate demonstrates ability to resolve conflict with person directly involved; demonstrates active listening skills; focuses on conflict resolution, not blame.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Teamwork: demonstrates ability to work as part of a team; seeks the perspective and expertise of others; looks for opportunities to support others on team.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Customer Service Oriented: demonstrates strong customer service orientation with the ability to provide clear consistent information and service; demonstrates ability to handle difficult customers; delivers service in a timely and professional way.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not Relevant
Work Experience Rating: Does candidate possess experience directly related to the position?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong		
Describe work experience as it relates to the position.		
Job Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's) Rating:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong		
Describe job knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) as it relates to the position.		
Describe unique skills important for the position/department.		
Overall Assessment:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Strong		

*Weak: Candidate did not meet the minimum expectations Average: Candidate meets the minimum expectations Strong: Candidate exceeds minimum expectations

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Cultural Dimensions and Origin Model

Sr.	Cultural Dimension	Origin Model
1	Past/Present Time Orientation	Kluckhohn (1961)
2	Achievement	McClelland (1961)
3	Uncertainty Avoidance	Cyert & March (1963), Hofstede (1980)
4	Locus of Control	Rotter (1966)
5	Monochronic vs. Polychronic	(Hall (1973)
6	Power Distance	Mulder (1971), Hofstede (1980)
7	Uncertainty Avoidance	Hofstede (1980)
8	Short/Long term orientation	Hofstede (1980)
9	Masculinity	Hofstede (1980)
10	Individualism vs. Collectivism	Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars (1993)
11	Hierarchy	Hierarchy
12	Hofstede (1980), House (2004)	Hofstede (1980), House (2004)
13	Neutral vs. Emotional / Assertiveness	Trompenaars (1993), Hofstede (1980)
14	Particularism vs. Universalism	Trompenaars (1993)
15	Diffuse vs. Specific	Trompenaars (1993)
16	Achieved vs. Ascribed Status	Trompenaars (1993)
17	Individualism	Triandis (1995)
18	Deductive/Intuitive thinking	Foster (2000)
19	Trust	Covey (2008)

Table 2-2: Nine Dimensions of the Culture Measurement in GLOBE Model

Table 2-2 : Nine Dimensions of the Culture Measurement in GLOBE Model

Power Distance	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) separated by power, authority, and prestige
In-Group Collectivism	Degree to which a culture's people (should) take pride in and (should) feel loyalty toward their families, organizations, and employers
Institutional Collectivism	Degree to which individuals are (should be) encouraged by institutions to be integrated into broader entities with harmony and cooperation as paramount principles at the expense of autonomy and individual freedom
Uncertainty Avoidance	Degree to which a culture's people (should) seek orderliness, consistency, and structure
Future Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) willing to defer immediate gratification for future benefits
Gender Egalitarianism	Degree to which a culture's people (should) support gender equality
Assertiveness	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) assertive, confrontational, and aggressive
Humane Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people are (should be) fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind toward others
Performance Orientation	Degree to which a culture's people (should) encourage and reward people for performance

The descriptions are derived from: House R.J. and Hanges P.J., Javidan M., Dorfman P.W., Gupta V.(2004).

Table 3-1: Demographic characteristics of the 24 interviewees

Characteristics	Number of interviewees	Characteristics	Number of interviewees
Gender		Education	
Male	19	Masters and above	18
Female	5	Bachelors	6
Age		Economic sector of current job	
Below 25		State	20
25-30		Non-state	4
31-40	21	Company Sector	
Above 40	3	Energy	19
		Telecom	2
		Misc.	3

Table 3-1: Demographic characteristics of the 24 interviewees

Table 4-1 List of Themes

Table 4-1 List of themes

Codes		Category	Themes
very deeply, totally different, family-oriented, relations count, know each other by references, habits are totally different, easily get along with other people, easy-going culture yet strict in discipline, respect other religion, open minded, accept difference		Key characteristics	Culture Chinese Culture
religious power is very important, different working environment, work ethics, usually give job on basis of cast, creed (for minorities), very hardworking people, limited to work, use political influences, problem solving, Gora mentality, practical, focused, straight forward, communicate recruitment and selection demands directly and clearly		Key characteristics	Pakistani Culture
Chinese	even good <i>guanxi</i> doesn't work if candidate lacks good education, hands on experience for final selection, that is very basic for employment	Performance orientation	GLOBE Study's nine dimensions of culture
Pakistani	<i>sifarish</i> can only bring to the table, relevant skills and abilities are essence for long-term future career development, satisfy job requirements and learn".		
Chinese	group decisions, group works	Assertiveness	
Pakistani	Confrontation avoided in final selection, patriarchy, assertiveness is for men		
Chinese	long-term planning, encourage continuous education for professional development, use <i>guanxi</i> for adhoc recruitment	Future orientation	
Pakistani	strategic level through planning and entry level on adhoc basis, lethargic after getting job, lack personal initiative for education or training, career development		
Chinese	benefit family, friends, and community, desire to be caring, selfless, and kind	Humane orientation	
Pakistani	fair dealings, fulfill promises/agreements, religion is fundamental, covers everything		
Chinese	interdependent, can't be selfish by fulfilling only our own career needs, have duties and obligations towards others that outweigh personal priorities	Institutional collectivism	
Pakistani	members from social life benefit selection decisions for good at large, especially politicians and government members strongly influence, 'you have to hire'		
Chinese	things are decided in a group, panel interviews for selection, trust built over time, influences final selection, only <i>guanxi</i> decides which company you choose	In-group collectivism	
Pakistani	influenced by social life, trust currency, businesses through social connections		
Chinese	uniform culture, balanced approach	Gender egalitarianism	
Pakistani	<i>sifarish</i> doesn't serve men and women to get recruited and selected equally across all levels		

Chinese	obedience to hierarchy, respect <i>guanxi</i> by seniors, ministry or ruling party may influence final selection, MNCs final decision is with head office authority	Power distance	
Pakistani	top management takes final interviews, boss is always right, politicians/MNAs refer list of their voters from villages to select without showing in interviews		
Chinese	<i>guanxi</i> works through panel interviews to avoid risk of wrong staffing	Uncertainty avoidance	
Pakistani	formal procedure to avoid <i>sifarish</i> based recruitment, involves test/interviews		
special close relationship, good reference, 'China way', basic way, involves activities i.e. drinking, eating, dancing, games, theatre, movie, gifts, traveling, easily finds jobs		Characteristics of <i>guanxi</i>	Informal Social Networks
get certain job information, doesn't affect a lot		Informational <i>guanxi</i>	<i>Guarxi</i>
finds you job very easily, <i>guanxi</i> is through the process		Influential <i>guanxi</i>	
personal <i>guanxi</i> versus working <i>guanxi</i> , e.g., colleague, neighbor, community		Changing trends	
easy to do business, formal source is not great enough sometimes, finds you best		Advantages	
incompetent hiring, dependency on people, very hard, tiring, requires effort for foreigners		Disadvantages	
personal social connections, selections based on cast, creed, select just on a call without interview, involves working together, favors, lunch, dinners, relatives with political contacts		Characteristics of <i>Sifarish</i>	
Informational exchange of job information is much better for the organization		Informational <i>Sifarish</i>	
<i>Sifarish</i> is very heavy, not just recommendation, can't say 'no', may create new position		Influential <i>Sifarish</i>	
current government has strong will with prospering merit based recruitment, more aware and educated to youth, casts does not matter, person should work with dedication		Changing trends	
should not be taken negative always, honor informal social contacts, cost effective, candidate is good match, quick and saves time and energy		Advantages	
bias, incompetent candidate, mismatch, time and cost, demand on salary, employee dissatisfaction, internal politics, nepotism, formal process gets compromised at times		Disadvantages	
Chinese	no policy on <i>guanxi</i> , due to privacy, <i>guanxi</i> is personal, avoid due to legal aspect	Informal sources	Recruitment and Selection Policies
	uniform culture, balanced approach	Diversity Policy	
	Presence of Job Descriptions & details about business and clients in Pakistan	Formal JDs	
	change policy as needed, policies are as Pakistani laws, not the Chinese	Policy manual	
	no strict policy compliance, flexible, change as per business needs	Policy compliance	
	formal process, though <i>guanxi</i> is present throughout the process	R & S process	

Pakistani	Few policies cover 'referral system' or reward it, mostly tacit understanding	Informal sources	Recruitment and Selection Practices
	women are encouraged, senior people accorded top management positions	Diversity Policy	
	proper Job Descriptions present	Formal JDs	
	have set policies as per laws, email mode of communication not WeChat	Policy manual	
	strictly expect to comply, lack implementation, MNCs follow ILO standard	Policy compliance	
	formal process based on both formal and referral system.	R & S process	
Chinese	Both ad-hoc and planned recruitment as per level, call on phone to ex-employer, formally advertise internally/publicly, CV screening, shortlisting, interview	Overall practice	
	friends, employee referrals, email to local staff, WhatsApp, QQ, WeChat groups,	Informal sources	
	newspaper, job portal, internet, job hunting HR service company	Formal process	
	guanxi, resume doesn't matter, missing facts, company logos	resume shortlisting	
	panel interviews, character (positivity), internationalized, benefit to company, technical knowledge, aptitude, experience, education, culture compatibility, dress code, attitude, contrast between resume and actual candidate.	Conduct of interviews	
	confidence, communication skills, Mandarin & English language proficiency	right consideration	
	selfish as thinks about his career, ugly dressing, lacks character (lacks positivity)	wrong consideration	
	very important, clear mind and thinking, overall should makes sense, confidence, speak well, eyes make sense, cultural gestures not important	Body language	
Pakistani	formal advertising internally/publicly, CV screening, shortlisting, interview candidates, ad-hoc hiring at low-level, planning at strategic level	Overall practice	
	Word OfMouth, friends, relatives, referrals, internal employees	Informal sources	
	Newspapers, social media, head hunting, website, portals, campus recruitments	Formal sources	
	first impression, long working history, relevant experience, qualification, skills,	resume shortlisting	
	panel interview, soft and technical skills, deserving competent candidate, win-win situation, serious about job, humble not over-confident, communication, well-dressed, interact with panel, bears pressure, experience, knowledge, urge to learn	Conduct of interviews	
	good manner for dressing, presentation skill, be on time, should be ready	right consideration	
	incompetent candidate, disturbance of work flow	wrong consideration	
	Important but depends on job, confidence, friendly, smile, hand gestures, eyes contact, shy, avoiding, uncomfortable	Body language	

Table 5-1 Comparison of the most significant differences and similarities between *guanxi* and *sifarish* using GLOBE study's culture dimensions

GLOBE Dimensions	Study's	CN	PK	Comments
Performance Orientation practice		▼	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> overlooked CV, standards of selection and favored weak ties based selection for relational fit and to reach group harmony. Whereas, drawing on homogenous groups (e.g., familial, tribe, creed, region, community) <i>sifarish</i> favoured strong ties for final selection. Both exhibited high on value with strong desire to be performance oriented at both societal and organizational levels.
Performance Orientation value		▲	▲	
Assertiveness Orientation Practice		▼	▼	Both <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> were found low on practices yet reported high on value which marked desire to be more assertive oriented. Panel interviews were used to reach mutual consensus and cooperation and to avoid confrontation in final decision making.
Assertiveness Orientation value		▲	▲	
Future orientation practice			▼	<i>Guanxi</i> reported on average on practice as managers document future plans for required headcount in their organizations, yet found it difficult to neglect adhoc practices resulting in use of <i>guanxi</i> . Whereas <i>sifarish</i> reported low on practice and high on value with desire to be future oriented.
Future orientation value		▲	▲	
Humane orientation practice		▲	▲	<i>Guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> reported strongly high on practice and value both in society and organization. Managers take care of ties well-being and favored candidates from weak and strong ties respectively for selection.
Humane orientation value		▲	▲	
Institutional collectivism practice		▲	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> (weak ties) strongly high on institutional collectivism practice and value, whereas <i>sifarish</i> reported low on institutional collectivism practice and high on value. While making selection, decisions were more influenced by strong ties of <i>sifarish</i> than ties with co-workers at workplace.
Institutional collectivism value		▲	▼	
In-group collectivism practice		▲	▲	<i>Guanxi</i> was reported significantly high on in-group collectivism practice and value. Chinese managers took high pride in loyalty towards in-group members. Likewise, drawing on strong ties, <i>sifarish</i> high on in-group collectivism practice and is accepted by Pakistani managers as loyalty to in-group members.
In-group collectivism value		▲	▲	
Gender egalitarianism practice		▼	▼	Major differences identified, <i>guanxi</i> didn't work based on gender. Chinese manager marked low on practice and high on value, encouraged inclusive approach yet restrained women at top management. <i>Sifarish</i> reported low on practice and high on value which marked Pakistani managers' desire through progressive initiatives of day care, maternity leaves on gender egalitarianism in recruitment and selection.
Gender egalitarianism value		▲	▲	
Power distance practice		▲	▲	Both <i>guanxi</i> and <i>sifarish</i> were strongly high on practice and value with obedience to authority, favored recommendations from hierarchy, both focused selecting a 'relational fit' over 'job-fit'. There was tolerance for unequal distribution of power.
Power distance value		▲	▲	
Uncertainty avoidance practice		▲	▼	<i>Guanxi</i> reported high on uncertainty avoidance practice and value which marked strong desire for predictability, consistency in structure and process, and realization of lack of implementation of long-term recruitment and selection planning as part of improving at societal and organizational level. <i>Sifarish</i> was used to avoid risk of wrong appointment by relying on familiar and trusted social contacts
Uncertainty avoidance value		▲	▼	