

BRIDGING CULTURAL BARRIERS IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN COLLABORATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF MECHANISMS, MEDIATORS, AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper synthesizes recent evidence on how global supply chain (GSC) partners bridge cultural barriers and how cultural, relational, and structural antecedents translate into collaboration and performance outcomes.

Methodology: A systematic review of 41 peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2025 was conducted using the Web of Science Core Collection. Studies were screened using explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria focused on culture-related mechanisms in interorganizational collaboration; data were extracted and thematically coded to identify antecedents, mediators, and outcomes.

Findings: The literature shows a clear shift from conceptual work (2021–2022) to empirical testing (2023 onward). Across studies, cultural distance, cultural intelligence, and organizational culture affect collaboration primarily through mediators especially trust, information/knowledge sharing, and supply chain integration thereby influencing operational, financial, innovation, resilience, and sustainability outcomes.

Practical Implications: Managers should treat culture as a governable collaboration capability, combining relational governance (trust-building, communication routines) with integration practices and knowledge-sharing systems.

Value: The review consolidates fragmented findings into a relational-capability chain (Antecedents → Mediators → Outcomes) that clarifies how cultural differences become either friction or advantage in cross-border supply networks.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern global trade relies a lot on complicated supply chain partnerships that cross national and organizational lines. Within these global networks, the interaction of many organizational and country cultures is increasingly recognized as a key element influencing collaborative success and overall supply chain performance (Dhaigude, Chatterjee, and Kamath 2025). There has been a big rise

in academic interest in the link between culture and global supply chain collaboration. This is especially seen in the growing number of studies that have been published recently.

Preliminary academic contributions in this domain (2021–2022) developed theoretical foundations centred on transactional interactions, relational aspects, and traditional cultural factors as suggested by Hofstede (Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022). Since 2023, there has been a significant rise in empirical and mixed-method research, indicating a shift from conceptual investigation to evidence-based analysis of cultural mechanisms and collaborative dynamics. Recent studies underscore that the optimal combination of factors, such as supply chain integration and big data analytics capacity, is essential for improving both economic and operational performance to achieve supply chain resilience (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024). Additionally, studies have investigated the positive impact of coopetition on organizational performance (Xie et al. 2023) and analyzed how relational elements and strategic awareness enhance trust in cross-border collaborations (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021).

While empirical studies currently dominate the literature and underline the practical orientation of the field, the existing research landscape faces fragmented conceptual frameworks regarding crosscultural supply chain collaboration. A lack of both theoretical and integrative reviews may have hindered comprehensive model development that could explain relational governance, cultural intelligence, and the associated performance outcomes.

This systematic review aims to integrate research on methods and strategies for overcoming cultural barriers in global supply chains. Specifically, we integrate three distinct domains culture in international business, supply chain collaboration, and relational governance—into a coherent framework. We particularly assess the impact of the cultural, social, and structural antecedents on collaboration through mediating processes such as integration, trust, and information sharing. This approach demonstrates that effective cultural bridging requires iterative sensemaking, communication, and colearning, which transforms cultural differences from a potential problem into a source of innovation and mutual benefit. This project informs a relational-capability framework, illustrating precisely how important cultural factors are in enhancing performance, enabling long-term innovation, and ensuring the supply chain is resilient.

2. METHOD

The literature search utilized the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database, selected for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications and its multidisciplinary significance in management, business, engineering, and social sciences. The

aim was to discover recent academic articles concerning the relationship between cultural factors and knowledge sharing or collaboration in global and interorganizational settings.

The search approach utilized a mix of Boolean operators (OR and AND) to encompass varied yet interconnected topics. The initial set of terms encapsulated cultural dimensions: "cultural differences" OR "cultural alignment" OR "cultural intelligence" OR "intercultural communication" OR "cross-cultural management" OR "cultural diversity" OR "cultural adaptation" OR "cultural integration" OR "cultural barriers" OR "cultural competence" OR "interorganizational culture" OR "culture."

This group was amalgamated utilizing the AND operator with a secondary cluster of terms denoting collaborative and supply-chain aspects: "global supply chain management" OR "interorganizational collaboration" OR "supply chain partnership" OR "international business networks" OR "global logistics" OR "buyer-supplier relationships" OR "cross-border collaboration"

OR "strategic alliances" OR "supply chain integration" OR "collaborative supply chain practices" OR "knowledge sharing" OR "trust and commitment" OR "information exchange."

The results were modified to include only pertinent and current literature by filtering for the English language and restricting the research domains to Business, Economics, Computer Science, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Operations Research, Management Science, and Social Sciences. Only articles, review papers, early access items, and proceedings published from 2021 to 2025 were included. Research classified within Information Science Library Science, Engineering Civil, Engineering Electrical Electronic, and Arts Humanities Other Topics was omitted to preserve disciplinary specificity.

The search produced a total of 428 documents. The obtained records were exported for additional screening, elimination of duplicates, and evaluation of eligibility according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria focused on cultural dynamics and interorganizational knowledge transfer.

The authors subsequently conducted a comprehensive review of the selected papers' entire texts. The review phase consisted of two sub-stages: Evaluation and Reporting. During the evaluation phase, a thorough content analysis was performed on all forty-one papers. The results are methodically displayed in tables and figures, emphasizing theme insights and delineating an organized future study program. A comprehensive report on these findings is provided in the subsequent section.

Following full-text screening and eligibility assessment, the final sample comprised 41 studies published between 2021 and 2025. The next section reports descriptive trends (publication patterns, countries, methods, theories, and industries) and then synthesizes the substantive evidence on antecedents, mediators, and outcomes in cross-cultural supply chain collaboration.

3. RESULTS

Utilizing the information and structure presented in the literature, the following constitutes a comprehensive context for the part dedicated to the results:

3.1 MOST INFLUENTIAL ARTICLES

Citation counts during a specified period can be utilized to examine an article's citation volume. An article possesses greater significance and impact than one with fewer citations if it has a comparatively high citation count (Tsay 2009). Citation analysis is a highly endorsed method for evaluating the influence of a scientific work. Table 1 examines five extensively referenced articles about supply chain integration (SCI) and culture. (Y. Jiang,

Feng, and Huang 2024) emphasize that the ideal amalgamation of antecedents enhances both economic and operational performance for supply chain resilience. (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) examine how relational components, influenced by metacapabilities such as strategic sensitivity, augment trust in cross-border partnerships. (Xie et al. 2023) illustrate the beneficial effect of coopetition on organizational performance. (Long et al. 2023) demonstrate that blockchain technology enhances supply chain confidence and serves as a partial mediator in green supply chain integration. (Cherbib et al. 2021) examine the influence of complementarity, commitment, and compatibility on digitization decisions within asymmetric coalitions.

Table 1: Most influential papers

Paper	Title	Citation Count	Journal
(Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024)	Antecedent configurations toward supply chain resilience: The joint impact of supply chain integration and big data analytics capability	97	JOURNAL OF OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT
(Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021)	Strategic agility, dynamic relational capability and trust among SMEs in transitional economies	71	JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS
(Xie et al. 2023)	Coopetition and organizational performance outcomes: A meta-analysis of the main and moderator effects	57	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH
(Long et al. 2023)	Adopting blockchain technology to enhance green supply chain integration: The moderating role of organizational culture	51	BUSINESS STRATEGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
(Cherbib et al. 2021)	Digital technologies and learning within asymmetric alliances: The role of collaborative context	33	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH
(Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022)	The moderating influence of supplier culture on the relationship between buyer power and supplier shirking	30	JOURNAL OF OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

3.2 PUBLICATION TRENDS BY YEAR

The temporal distribution of studies (fig 1) from 2021 to 2025 indicates an increasing academic interest in the nexus of culture and global supply chain collaboration. Initial contributions (2021–2022) established theoretical underpinnings, focusing on relational interaction, transaction cost economics, and Hofstede's cultural elements. Beginning in 2023, there is a considerable increase in quantitative research, indicating a transition in the area from conceptual inquiry to evidence-based examination of cultural mechanisms and collaborative dynamics. The anticipated continuance of publications in 2025 highlights a solidifying research agenda focused on cross-cultural integration, organizational learning, and dynamic capacities within supply networks. This trajectory indicates a growing acknowledgment of culture as a strategic factor in the success of global collaboration.

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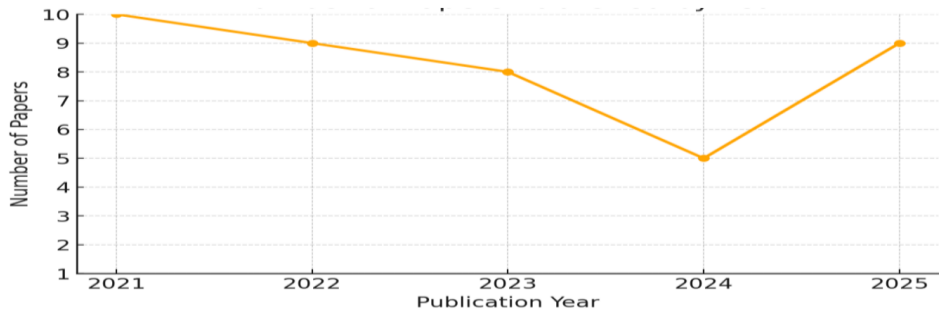


Figure 1: Numbers of papers published by year

3.3 PAPER TYPES

Fig 2 highlights a significant dominance of empirical studies in publications, with few review or conceptual papers. This empirical focus underscores the practical orientation of the field, supported by quantitative and mixed-method evidence to validate cultural and collaborative mechanisms. However, the lack of theoretical and integrative reviews points to fragmented conceptual frameworks in cross-cultural supply chain collaboration. While empirical research has improved the understanding of cultural constructs and their effects, it may have restricted the development of cohesive frameworks related to cultural intelligence, relational governance, and performance outcomes.

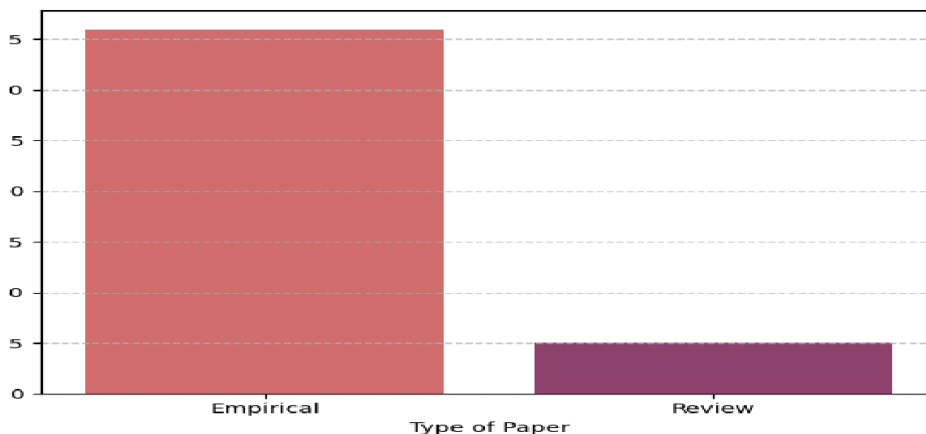


Figure 2: Numbers of papers by type

3.4 COUNTRIES INVESTIGATED

Figure 3 depict that there is a notable concentration of primary research on cultural dynamics in global supply chain collaboration in Asia, particularly China, which reflects the country's interest and role in global manufacturing. Meanwhile, Western economies, especially the US and select European nations, are also focusing on these cultural coordination mechanisms. However, there is limited representation from Latin America and Africa, highlighting a geographical imbalance in the research. To better understand cultural interactions in global supply chains, more cross-regional comparative studies are necessary, as current research confines the generalizability of theoretical insights.

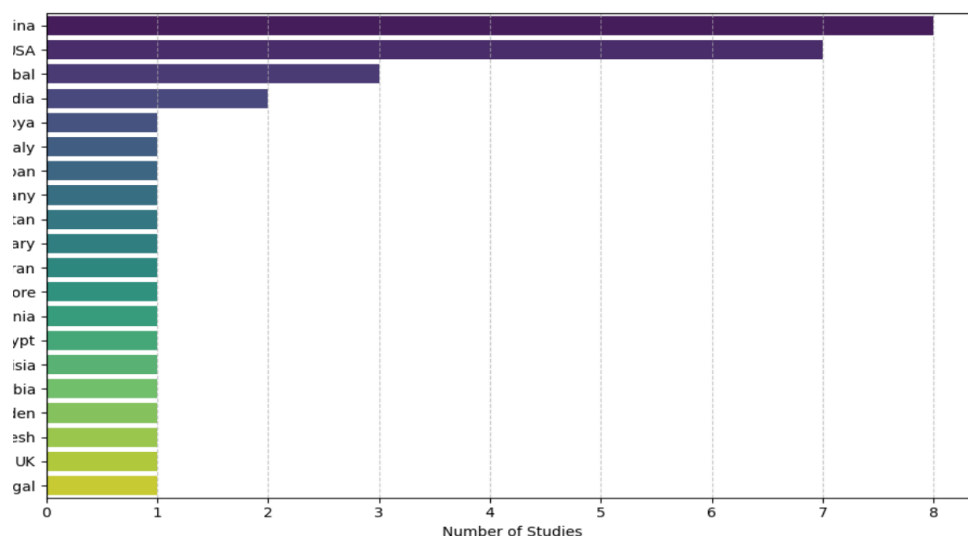


Figure 3: Numbers of countries investigated

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Methodology analysis indicates that cross-sectional surveys comprise a significant quantitative preponderance in cross-cultural supply chain studies, with 26 studies highlighting the emphasis on empirical validation of relational, cultural, and performance characteristics. However, qualitative methodologies provide interpretive insights and critical contextual depth to cultural sensemaking, despite being underrepresented, with only 10 studies. Moreover, mixed-methods approaches are highly underutilized, with only 1 research, and conceptual work, with only 4 studies, which indicates methodological inflexibility and conceptual disunity. This represents a problem in understanding the evolution of cultural dynamics over time and restricts theoretical integration longitudinally. The field has gradually moved from a conceptual inquiry during the period of 2021–2022 to evidence-based analysis starting from 2023 onwards; the limited availability of systematic reviews and meta-theoretical syntheses is a serious lacuna. There is a need to combine quantitative precision with qualitative insight through mixed-methods approaches to unravel the intricacies of the cultural mechanism to evolve integrated frameworks surpassing the existing empirically-focused yet theoretically disjointed environment, thereby enhancing pluralism in methodology, Look Table 2.

Table 2: Research methods used

Research Method	Studies
Mixed Methods	(Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025)
Quantitative	(Oh and Yoo 2022; Musarra et al. 2022; Fu et al. 2022; Xiong, Wang, and Zhao 2022; Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023; Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023; W. Jiang and Li 2023; Muthusamy and Dass 2021; Hanisch et al. 2025; Kim et al. 2021; Qammar et al. 2024; S. Liu et al. 2021; Karácsny et al. 2025; Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025; Shafiq, Johnson, and Klassen 2022; Xie et al. 2023; Espino-Rodríguez and Gebril Taha 2023; Ma and Ozer 2024; Aćimović, Mijušković, and Spasenić 2021; Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024; Wu et al. 2025; Cuyppers et al. 2024; Shao 2023; Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022; Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022; N. Li and Murphy 2021)
Qualitative	(Baumgaertner et al. 2025; Jhamb, Kampani, and Arya 2022; Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022; Nyamrunnda and Freeman 2021; Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025; S. Liu et al. 2021; Cherbib et al. 2021; Anderson, Müllern, and Danilovic 2023; Somers et al. 2024; Barros and Ramos 2025)
Other/Conceptual	(Dhaigude, Chatterjee, and Kamath 2025; Mahadevan 2021; Xu and Hao 2021; Jatobá, Franco, and Rodrigues 2023)

3.6 THEORY/Framework USED

Table 3 show that the investigation into cultural dynamics within global supply chain collaboration is based on fundamental frameworks, including the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Transaction Cost Theory (TCT/TCE), highlighting efficiency and competitive advantage. Supplementary theories such as Dynamic Capabilities and Knowledge-Based View (KBV) emphasize adaptation and knowledge transfer within multicultural environments. Cultural frameworks, such as Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions and Social Exchange Theory (SET), examine relational trust and governance. The advent of integrative frameworks like as the Relational View and Competing Values Framework (CVF) signifies a transition towards multi-theoretical synthesis, incorporating socio-cultural insights into the prevailing organizational economics paradigm.

Table 3: Theories used

Theory / Framework	Number of Studies
Resource-Based View (RBV)	10
Transaction Cost Theory (TCT/TCE)	8
Social Exchange Theory (SET)	3
Knowledge-Based View (KBV)	3
Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions	3
Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT)	3
Relational/Relational View Theory	3
Competing Values Framework (CVF)	2
Contingency Theory	2
Confucianism / Confucian Philosophy	2
Organizational Learning / Knowledge Creation	2
Cultural Intelligence Theory	2
Others (single occurrence each: e.g., Core Competency, Trust-Commitment, Balance, Servant Leadership, etc.)	17

3.7 INDUSTRY STUDIED

Demonstrated in Table 4 the industry's distribution indicates a significant focus on manufacturing, with twenty-seven studies, highlighting its importance in the analysis of cross-cultural coordination mechanisms, supplier integration, and operational efficiency key issues in global supply chain research. This approach aligns with the complex, multi-tier supplier networks in manufacturing,

which require cultural alignment to attain a competitive advantage. The restricted examination of extraction (1 study) and knowledge-intensive sectors (4 studies) highlights significant research gaps, whereas the moderate representation of services (12 studies) underscores the influence of culture on interpersonal trust and consumer engagement. Numerous research, such as (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021), encompass diverse industries, demonstrating that cultural dynamics transcend industry boundaries. Nonetheless, the generalizability of the findings is constrained by this sectoral imbalance, highlighting the need for further research in underrepresented industries to develop comprehensive, context-sensitive frameworks for cultural collaboration across varied supply chain contexts.

Table 4: Industry studied

Industry	Studies
Extraction	(Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021)
Production	(Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021; Muthusamy and Dass 2021; Hanisch et al. 2025; Qammar et al. 2024; Oh and Yoo 2022; Musarra et al. 2022; Fu et al. 2022; Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023; W. Jiang and Li 2023; Kim et al. 2021; Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025; Shafiq, Johnson, and Klassen 2022; Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025; S. Liu et al. 2021; Ma and Ozer 2024; Cherbib et al. 2021; Wu et al. 2025; Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022; Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022; N. Li and Murphy 2021; Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025; Barros and Ramos 2025; Aćimović, Mijušković, and Spasenić 2021; Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023; Baumgaertner et al. 2025; Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022; Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024)
Services	(Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021; Aćimović, Mijušković, and Spasenić 2021; Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023; Baumgaertner et al. 2025; Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022; S. Liu et al. 2021; Karácsony et al. 2025; Jhamb, Kampani, and Arya 2022; Espino-Rodríguez and Gebril Taha 2023; Anderson, Müllern, and Danilovic 2023; Shao 2023; Somers et al. 2024)
Knowledge	(Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021; Muthusamy and Dass 2021; Hanisch et al. 2025; Qammar et al. 2024)

3.8 ANTECEDENTS FOR SCI AND CULTURE

Refer to Table 5, the antecedents revealed in many studies indicate that cultural and relational structures are essential for comprehending collaboration in global supply chains. Preeminent independent factors, including cultural distance, relational capital, trust, and corporate culture, illustrate how cross-national disparities and internal cultural orientations influence the quality of collaboration. Complementary antecedents, such as integration methods, partner capacities, and knowledge-based competencies, indicate an increasing emphasis on the structural and cognitive preparedness of enterprises to navigate cultural complexity. Strategic and environmental factors, ranging from governance asymmetry to political instability, elucidate these links by highlighting how institutional contexts shape cultural interactions. These antecedents illustrate culture as a dynamic strategic resource and relational interface that facilitates or hinders the success of supply chain collaboration across national, organizational, and functional borders.

Table 5: Antecedents (Independent Variables) studied

Category	Antecedents (Independent Variables)
Cultural / Relational Constructs	(Oh and Yoo 2022) Cultural distance; Product market similarity (Musarra et al. 2022) Expressing and evoking emotional states, awareness and interaction with cultural intelligence (W. Jiang and Li 2023) Trust, personal contact, sensitivity to buyer needs, motivation to maintain partnership (Kim et al. 2021) Relational capital, cultural adaptation, mutual commitment (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Communication, social bonds, knowledge sharing, strategically sensitive communication (P. C. Y. Liu et al. 2021) Confucian virtues, relational vs. transactional governance (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Empowerment-oriented and hierarchical culture (Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023) Family business culture, alliance experience
Compatibility / Capability	(Fu et al. 2022) Partner capability, distance to R&D center, project budget, international collaboration

Category	Antecedents (Independent Variables)
Constructs	(Xiong, Wang, and Zhao 2022) Cultural distance, alliance formation capability (Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022) Transaction-specific investment, communication, supplier opportunism (Aćimović, Mijušković, and Spasenić 2021) Organizational culture dimensions: development orientation, hierarchy, teamwork (Karácsony et al. 2025) Knowledge management practices (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024) Big data analytics capability (BDAC) (Espino-Rodríguez and Gebril Taha 2023) Absorptive capacity (Qammar et al. 2024) Cultural intelligence, language barriers, disagreements, workplace friendship
Integration / Collaboration Factors	(S. Liu et al. 2021) Supply chain integration (SCI) (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Supply chain integration orientation (Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025) Internal, process, and product integration (Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022) Strategic and operational integration (Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025) Internal, supplier, and customer integration (Fu et al. 2022) Partner integration and project collaboration (Ma and Ozer 2024) Knowledge sharing and organizational culture (Anderson, Müllern, and Danilovic 2023) Collaborative culture, collaborative innovation (Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025) Shared goals, understanding, processes, and values
Strategic / Structural Drivers	(N. Li and Murphy 2021) Cultural diversity in alliance portfolios (Wu et al. 2025) Horizontal coopection, proactive and responsive search (Baumgaertner et al. 2025) Governance asymmetry, negotiation power imbalance (Hanisch et al. 2025) Number of good faith provisions (governance structure) (Shafiq, Johnson, and Klassen 2022) Supplier monitoring (Cuypers et al. 2024) Cultural, linguistic, and religious dissimilarity (Shao 2023) Cultural conflict, language motivation, economic vs. non-economic benefits (Barros and Ramos 2025) IT platform for information sharing and collective mindfulness
Environmental / Contextual Factors	(Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023) Political instability (Jhamb, Kampani, and Arya 2022) Employee orientation and service climate (Mahadevan 2021) Conceptual environmental framework for culture in SCM (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Industry context diversity (agribusiness, construction, IT, etc.) (Oh and Yoo 2022) Global market exposure and event study context (Xie et al. 2023) Meta-analysis of contextual cultural effects

3.9 CONSEQUENCES FOR SCI AND CULTURE

According to Table 6, in most of the literature reviewed, the dependent variables are focused on performance-oriented and integration-based outcomes, which indicate a continued managerial interest in measurable benefits from cultural and collaborative alignment. The dominating financial, operational, and innovation-related outcomes prove that researchers still use measurable performance to assess the effect of culture. Relationship outcomes like trust stability, alliance performance, and collaboration have proven to be of great importance for soft value creation, inherent in these collaborations.

Impacts of integration and resilience reflect the fact that culture influences both immediate performance and adaptability of supply networks due to rapid changes. New themes like sustainability, green supply chain management, and organizational mindfulness show that in most cases, researchers link cultural alignment to long-term systemic resilience. Ethical and environmental dimensions of partnership influence how well it works.

Table 6: Consequences (Dependent Variables) studied

Category	Consequences (Dependent Variables)
Performance Outcomes	(Oh and Yoo 2022) Abnormal stock returns (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Firm performance (Shafiq, Johnson, and Klassen 2022) Buyer financial performance; robustness (ROS, sustainability) (Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022) Relative advantage of importing (Fu et al. 2022) Outstanding project outcomes; project scores (Musarra et al. 2022) Mutual trust (Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022) Success of logistics outsourcing relationships (Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023) Alliance performance (Hanisch et al. 2025) Cognitive frame similarity (Baumgaertner et al. 2025) Corporate entrepreneurship success; innovation potential (W. Jiang and Li 2023) Stability of supplier-buyer partnership (Kim et al. 2021) International joint venture (IJV) performance (Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025) Operational and financial performance (S. Liu et al. 2021) Flexibility and financial performance (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024) Economic and operational performance (Wu et al. 2025) Sustainable product innovation (N. Li and Murphy 2021) Firm performance (Somers et al. 2024) Firm performance and cooperation outcomes (Barros and Ramos 2025) Organizational performance improvements
Integration Outcomes	(S. Liu et al. 2021) Supply chain integration (SCI) (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Green supply chain management and integration (Espino-Rodríguez and Gebril Taha 2023) Supply chain integration (SCI) (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024) Supply chain resilience and integration (Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025) Internal and process integration (Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025) Internal, supplier, and customer integration (Fu et al. 2022) Project-based international collaboration and integration outcomes (Karácsony et al. 2025) Innovation activity as integration performance proxy (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Supply chain integration as cultural alignment outcome
Relational and Trust-based Outcomes	(Musarra et al. 2022) Mutual trust (Muthusamy and Dass 2021) Interfirm trust and mutual influence (W. Jiang and Li 2023) Supplier-buyer trust stability (S. Liu et al. 2021) Relational and transactional governance balance (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Cognitive and affective trust; dynamic relational capability (DRC) (Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023) Alliance performance moderated by family business culture (Jhamb, Kampani, and Arya 2022) Customer relationship quality and brand building (Kim et al. 2021) Relational capital and mutual commitment (Cherbib et al. 2021) Trust-commitment learning outcomes

Category	Consequences (Dependent Variables)
	(Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025) Collaboration, flexibility, and shared value creation
Capability and Adaptation Outcomes	(Wu et al. 2025) Sustainable product innovation (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024) Supply chain resilience (SCR) (Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022) Success of logistics outsourcing relationship (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Green HRM and GSCM capabilities (Fu et al. 2022) Outstanding project outcome capability (Ma and Ozer 2024) Knowledge sharing and new product performance (Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025) Sustainable supply chain performance (SSCP) (Barros and Ramos 2025) Innovation and decision-making capability (Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022) Supplier opportunism (as inverse performance indicator) (Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022) Supplier shirking and coercive/expert power (Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025) Supply chain resilience (SCRES), flexibility, visibility, velocity
Others / Behavioral Outcomes	(Somers et al. 2024) Cooperation and adaptation (Somers et al. 2024) Correct language use and payment motivation (Cuypers et al. 2024) Equity joint venture formation (Anderson, Müllern, and Danilovic 2023) Collaborative culture and trust outcomes (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Strategic agility (Hanisch et al. 2025) Good faith provisions as behavioral governance outcome

3.10 MEDIATORS

Mediating mechanisms refer to the link that helps to convert cultural and relational inputs into quantifiable results. The dominant mediators, including supply chain integration (SCI), relationship capital, and knowledge sharing, reflect the twin principles of coordinating and learning from crosscultural collaboration. As detailed in table 7, these frameworks enable companies to transform intangible cultural knowledge into action alignment and skill enhancement. The mediating role of relational and social capital therefore underscores the critical function of building trust and governing adaptation to limit uncertainty across the cultural divide. At the same time, learning-oriented mediators, such as absorptive capacity and collaborative knowledge creation, underline the interactive nature of culture as a process of mutual adaptation. Together, these mediators confirm that successful cultural bridging is based on continuous sensemaking, communication, and co-learning, which position integration and trust as dynamic relational rather than static organizational attributes.

Table 7: Mediators (Mediating Constructs) studied

Category	Mediators (Mediating Constructs)
Integration-Based Mediators	(Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Supply Chain Integration (SCI) as mediator between cultural dimensions and firm performance (Espino-Rodríguez and Gebril Taha 2023) Supply Chain Integration mediating absorptive capacity and service performance (S. Liu et al. 2021) Supply Chain Integration linking flexibility and financial outcomes (Hendijani and Saeidi Saei 2025) Internal, process, and product integration mediating operational and financial performance (Osei, Papadopoulos, and Acquaye 2025) Internal, supplier, and customer

Category	Mediators (Mediating Constructs)
	<p>integration mediating sustainability outcomes (Y. Jiang, Feng, and Huang 2024) Supply Chain Integration as mechanism for resilience and performance (Thai, Rahman, and Tran 2022) Integration mediating strategic and operational success of logistics outsourcing</p>
Relational and Social Capital Mediators	<p>(Kim et al. 2021) Relational capital mediating cultural adaptation and IJV performance (Nasr and Al-Tabbaa 2023) Alliance Management Capability (AMC) mediating alliance experience, culture, and performance (Muthusamy and Dass 2021) Interfirm trust mediating mutual influence and alliance performance (P. C. Y. Liu et al. 2021) Relational vs. transactional governance mediating Confucian values and B2B relationship stages (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Cognitive and affective trust mediating communication and strategic agility (Musarra et al. 2022) Cultural intelligence and emotional capability mediating relational trust formation (Cherbib et al. 2021) Absorptive and joint learning mediating trust-commitment and interorganizational collaboration</p>
Knowledge and Learning Mediators	<p>(Fu et al. 2022) Knowledge-based view and project collaboration mediating cultural distance and performance (Qammar et al. 2024) Knowledge acquisition mediating cultural intelligence, disagreements, and dynamic capabilities (Karácsony et al. 2025) Knowledge management practices mediating innovation outcomes (Ma and Ozer 2024) Knowledge sharing mediating organizational culture and new product performance (Nyamrunda and Freeman 2021) Internal knowledge alignment and social network learning mediating trust and strategic agility (Cherbib et al. 2021) Absorptive learning and joint learning mediating digital collaboration (Barros and Ramos 2025) Collective mindfulness and attention-based learning mediating IT-enabled collaboration and decision-making</p>
Cultural and Behavioral Mediators	<p>(Wu et al. 2025) Coopetition behavior mediating culture and sustainable product innovation (Skowronski, Benton, and Handley 2022) Expert and coercive power mediating cultural dimensions and supplier shirking (Somers et al. 2024) Cooperation and adaptation mediating servant leadership and performance (Daghar, Alinaghian, and Turner 2025) Shared goals, understanding, and processes mediating cultural propagation and supply chain resilience (Anderson, Müllern, and Danilovic 2023) Collaborative culture mediating trust and value co-creation (Baumgaertner et al. 2025) Dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, transforming) mediating cultural differences and innovation outcomes (Andaleeb, Saleh, and Ali 2022) Communication mediating transaction-specific investment and supplier opportunism</p>
Others / Hybrid Mediators	<p>(Hanisch et al. 2025) Cognitive frame similarity mediating good faith provisions and governance alignment (N. Li and Murphy 2021) Cultural diversity mediating alliance portfolio performance (Shafiq, Johnson, and Klassen 2022) Supplier monitoring mediating transaction cost and buyer performance (Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Green HRM mediating cultural values and environmental performance</p>

Category	Mediators (Mediating Constructs)
	(Rizzi, Gigliotti, and Annunziata 2023) Cultural transitivity mediating shared values and collaboration outcomes

4. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

The literature illustrates a dynamic capability chain where cultural and relational antecedents contribute to moderating integration and learning processes, culminating in performance and resilience outcomes. Cultural intelligence, trust, and knowledge orientation function as strategic precursors that facilitate effective cross-border collaboration for organizations. These inputs primarily exert their influence through mediating processes, including supply chain integration, relational capital, and knowledge sharing, which convert cultural awareness into operational alignment and relational cohesiveness. As indicated in Figure 4, the resulting outcomes improved performance, sustainable innovation, and supply chain resilience are emergent aspects of culturally aware collaborative systems. This synthesis conceptually endorses a relational-capability framework, wherein culture serves as a latent facilitator, with its worth emerging through integration and learning processes. Bridging cultural divides is not about removal but orchestration, where cultural diversity serves as a resource for innovation and collaborative benefit.

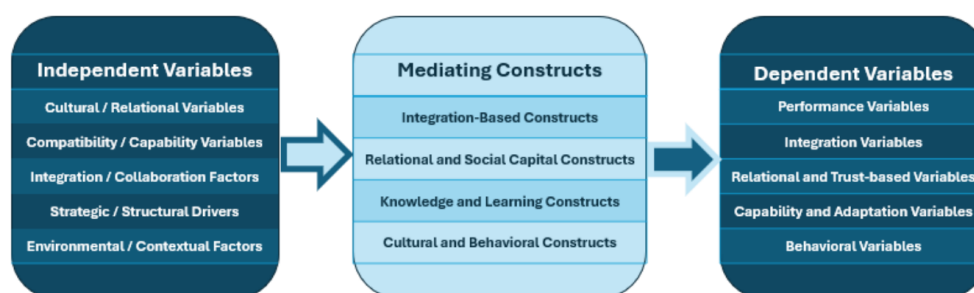


Figure 4: Conceptual Structure of Cultural Mechanisms in Global Supply Chain Collaboration

4.1 FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

The conceptual framework delineates multiple pathways for enhancing research on cultural factors in global supply chain collaboration. Initially, increased focus should be placed on the dynamic interaction between cultural and relational antecedents. Future research may utilize longitudinal and multi-level methodologies to investigate the co-evolution of cultural intelligence, trust, and governance structures across varying institutional contexts throughout time. Comparative analyses across industries and locations could elucidate whether cultural aspects (e.g., collectivism, uncertainty avoidance) consistently affect collaboration intensity or if their impacts are contingent upon context.

Secondly, the model highlights the mediating function of integration and learning processes, indicating a promising avenue for exploring how digital transformation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence redefine these mediators. Future study should examine how technology-enabled platforms promote trust development and knowledge exchange in culturally diverse networks. Furthermore, researchers should investigate the order and interplay of mediators specifically, whether relational capital precedes or succeeds integration in attaining performance outcomes.

Third, future research should expand the scope of dependent variables beyond conventional performance indicators to include resilience, sustainability, and innovation outcomes. Incorporating environmental and social performance metrics would synchronize supply chain studies with overarching sustainability objectives.

The conceptual model encourages the examination of cross-level and boundary-spanning mechanisms, such as the translation of individual cultural competences of managers into

organizational integration capabilities, or the scaling of firm-level cultural alignment to network-level performance. Future studies could advantageously employ mixed-method techniques, integrating network analysis, configurational methodologies, and experimental designs to elucidate the intricacies of culture– collaboration interactions.

These directives necessitate a more sophisticated and adaptive comprehension of how cultural diversity, when adeptly facilitated through integration and educational processes, transforms into a strategic asset for resilience and innovation in global supply chains.

5. DISCUSSION

This review consolidates recent evidence on how cultural, relational, and structural antecedents shape cross-border supply chain collaboration through mediators such as trust, information/ knowledge sharing, and supply chain integration. By organizing the literature into an Antecedents → Mediators → Outcomes chain, the paper clarifies why culture sometimes amplifies friction but can also become a collaboration capability that improves resilience, sustainability, innovation, and performance. The discussion below highlights the theoretical implications of this mechanism-based view and delineates practice-relevant insights within the explicit limits of the review scope.

5.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

First, our synthesis contributes to theoretical development by bringing together three areas: culture in international business, supply chain collaboration, and relational governance into an integrated framework. Current research on cultural distance, trust, and integration often examines each component separately; our model demonstrates how these components fit together sequentially (IV → Mediator → DV) and hence underlines the dynamic capabilities approach to cultural alignment. Emerging-market evidence of recent studies on the role of cultural compatibility for sustainable supply chain management has proved that cultural affinity has a positive impact on both environmental and economic performance.

The review broadens the conceptual base of supply chain integration from structural and process dimensions to cultural and relational mediators, showing that integration is not limited to technological alignment or process but also to shared values and trust. (M. Li and Lee 2025) on shared meaning in supply chains.

Third, our study underlines the importance of contextual and multi-level contingencies: the importance of cultural antecedents varies across institutional contexts, industries, and stages of maturation. For the cultural impacts on governance, see, for example, (Acquah, Naude, and Soni 2021). The research domain moves from considering culture as a barrier to considering it as an asset, expressed through mediating mechanisms that explain collaborative advantages in global supply chains.

5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

These implications should be interpreted cautiously. The reviewed evidence is limited to studies published between 2021 and 2025 and is geographically concentrated (with a strong emphasis on Asia particularly China and selected Western economies), which constrains generalizability across regions, industries, and institutional contexts. Accordingly, the recommendations below should be viewed as preliminary guidance grounded in the best available evidence within this bounded sample, rather than universal prescriptions.

For practitioners, the findings deliver three actionable insights. First, supply chain managers should view culture not as an exogenous risk but as a strategic enabler: investing in cultural compatibility, relational governance (trust, communication), and alignment capabilities can elevate supply-chain integration and performance. For example, firms in Asia with higher cultural affinity showed significantly better triple bottom line outcomes (economic +18 %,

environmental +12 %, social +32 %) in recent empirical analysis (T. H. Jiang and Chang 2025).

Second, managers must pay attention to the mediating mechanisms: technology and process investments are insufficient by themselves. They must be paired with relational mechanisms (trust, shared understanding) and knowledge-sharing processes to convert cultural diversity into integration success. The literature on trust and collaboration underscores that collaborative relationships require more than formal contracts they demand shared meaning and mutual commitment (Bakalo and Bogale 2024).

Third, in a world of frequent supply-chain disruption, firms should broaden their performance lens beyond cost and speed to include resilience, innovation, and sustainability, powered by cultural alignment. Firms that integrate cultural intelligence, relational capital, and integration capabilities build supply chains capable of adaptation, not just efficiency. As recent research emphasises, visibility and collaborative sense-and-respond capabilities are critical to resilience (Al-Ma'aitah 2024).

By following these implications, managers can turn cultural heterogeneity into competitive advantage rather than a burden.

6. LIMITATION

This systematic review has several limitations, both from a methodological perspective and from the gaps inherently identified within the literature that exists.

Methodologically, the research scope was limited to documents between 2021 and 2025, only in English. The search in the literature was conducted using only the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database; despite its broad coverage, relevant content indexed solely in other databases may have been excluded.

The field of study is beset by generalizability and conceptual completeness limitations in extant research.

1. Geographical Imbalance: Most of the primary research focuses on Asia, especially China, and Western economies, with limited representation from Latin America and Africa. This makes for a geographical imbalance that confines generalizability of theoretical insights into cultural interactions within global supply chains.

2. Methodological Constraints: Quantitative survey approaches are predominant in the field, and their nature is cross-sectional empirical validation. Thus, archival, and analytical methodologies that might be needed for long-term insight have been underutilized.

3. Conceptual Fragmentation: While the strong prevalence of empirical studies underlines the practical orientation of the field, the corresponding lack of theoretical or integrative reviews indicates that the conceptual frameworks regarding cross-cultural supply chain collaboration are fragmented. The development of cohesive models concerning cultural intelligence and relational governance may be restricted by such fragmentation.

7. CONCLUSION

This section conclusively presents the results of this systematic review on the mechanisms and strategies for bridging cultural gaps in global supply chain collaboration. The research effectively unified three distinct domains, namely supply chain collaboration, relational governance, and culture in international business, into a cohesive framework.

The review has subsequently established a distinct chain of influence, synthesizing the collective influence of the cultural, relational, and structural antecedents on collaboration through essential mediating mechanisms that result in the desired performance and resilience outcomes.

Principal Discoveries: • Culture as a Strategic Asset: The synthesis conceptually supports a relational-capability perspective that implies culture is a strategic resource whose value is

gained through integration and learning processes that transform diversity from a barrier to a source of innovation and collaborative advantage.

- **Dominance of Mediators:** The research results have indicated that inputs such as trust and cultural intelligence exert their influence through dynamic mediating mechanisms, including knowledge sharing, relational capital, and supply chain integration (SCI). These mechanisms convert cultural awareness into relational cohesiveness and operational alignment.
- **Academic Trajectory:** The discipline is empirically driven; the focus has transitioned from a conceptual inquiry in 2021–2022 to an evidence-based analysis since 2023. The research output is increasingly reporting resilience, sustainability, and innovation in addition to conventional financial and operational performance metrics. Collectively, the findings support a mechanism-based view of cultural alignment in global supply chains and clarify how relational governance and integration processes convert cultural diversity into collaboration outcomes. In other words, the research proves that the process of bridging cultural divides necessitates iterative sensemaking and communication-co-learning to allow companies to create adaptive supply chains, rather than merely efficient ones. These results contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks and provide managers with practical advice on how to leverage cultural heterogeneity as a competitive advantage.

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