

Nationality, Cultural Values and the Relative Importance of Task Performance and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour in Performance Evaluation Decisions

by

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This study examines managers' evaluations of overall job performance related to cultural orientations and nationality. Good citizenry enhances the common social welfare of a work unit, whereas task performance emphasizes core activities associated with task completion. Using data collected from both Chinese and Canadian respondents, we found collectivism related positively with good citizenry, which is beneficial to other citizens and organizations. Chinese respondents, as compared with their Canadian counterparts, gave more importance to good citizenship behavior, thinking that it would be beneficial to everyone. The behavioral differences between the nationalities remained strong even after controlling for differences in collectivism and power distance. The implications of this phenomenon into the future research and practices are discussed in this paper.

1. Introduction

Many modern organizations operate in a global context, and even domestic businesses face intensive competition from abroad. To function efficiently and smoothly in the era of globalization, it is important, more than ever before, to understand national and cultural differences in employees' beliefs, values and their behaviours. Indeed, extensive research has established that persons' self-concept, cognition, well-being, relationships with others and their behaviours are culturally bonded (Hofstede, 1980; Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier, 2002). At the same time, organizations are emphasizing increasingly on team structure, customer services, streamlined workforce, individual initiative and accountability. The scholarly interest in organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach, 2000) echoes this movement in organizational focus.

The OCB comprises of a cluster of employee behaviours that fall outside of employees' formal job descriptions, but make important contributions to the success

of an organization. Examples of OCB include interpersonal facilitation, putting extra effort into one's own work and taking initiatives to improve the workplace. Organ (1988) defined OCB as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization". A considerable number of studies have investigated personality, employee attitudes, leadership, job and organizational characteristics as antecedents of OCB and its impact on group and organizational outcomes (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Additionally, past research, has examined the role of OCB versus task performance in employee performance evaluations (Johnson, 2001; Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994). These studies have shown that task performance and OCB contribute almost equally to managers' overall performance evaluations (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

However, this research has been done in North America and cross-cultural research on OCB is still in its infancy (Farh, Hackett, and Chen, 2009). It is necessary for the advancement of the theory and practice of performance management in a global economy to assess the cross-cultural generalization of these findings. In the current study, we assess whether Chinese managers, as compared to their Canadian counterparts, place different importance on task performance versus OCB in their evaluations of overall job performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Contrast to task behaviours, which refer to the successful completion of core job task requirements, OCB contributes to organizational effectiveness through the psychological, social and organizational work processes (Borman, and Motowidlo, 1993; Organ, 1997). Coleman and Borman (2000) show that several different concepts of OCB introduced in scholarly literature could be represented by a three-factor model consisting of: OCB-interpersonal (behaviour benefiting individual organization members, such as altruism, cooperation, interpersonal facilitation); OCB-organizational (behaviour benefiting the organization, such as following rules and procedures, allegiance, loyalty, commitment); and OCB-task conscientiousness (behaviour benefiting the job or task, such as extra effort and job dedication).

Parallel efforts have been undertaken to articulate the construct and dimensions of OCB among the Chinese samples. Using scales developed in China (Farh, Zhong and Organ, 2001), Zhong and Farh (2003) tested a one-factor model (LePine, Erez and Johnson, 2002), a two-factor model (Williams and Anderson, 1991), a three-factor model (Coleman and Borman, 2000) and a four-factor model (Zhong and Farh, 2003). Their findings provide support for Coleman and Borman's (2000) three factor integrated model, and tentative evidence suggests generalizability of the factor structure of OCB across North America and China. Although the four-factor model (Zhong and Farh, 2003) had significantly better fit than the three-factor model (Coleman and Borman, 2000), the fourth factor compromises primarily social welfare participation (e.g., contribute to commonwealth money donations),

which is unique to Chinese culture, especially to state-owned enterprises. Thus we excluded social welfare participation and employed the three-factor model.

2.2. Task Performance and OCB in Performance Evaluations

Previous research examined whether OCB and task performance explained unique variance in judgments of overall performance. Studies using overall measures of OCB (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994), or dimensional measures of OCB (Johnson, 2001) have reported unique contributions of OCB and task performance in explaining ratings of overall performance. This finding is robust given that these studies used different samples, different research designs, different sources of ratings, and different measures of task performance. Podsakoff et al (2000) summarized the variance accounted for by task performance and OCB and concluded that, on average, the two contribute about equally to ratings of overall performance. The organizational value of OCB is demonstrated further by studies showing its substantial contribution to team and organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff, Ahearn and Mackenzie, 1997). However, these studies were conducted in North America. No similar study has been undertaken in a country with a very different culture such as China. In most recent comprehensive review of OCB research in a global context, Farh et al. (2009) noted that although OCB studies conducted outside North America are increasing, there is a dearth of multiple nation studies of OCB and even fewer considered nationality and culture values together. The question arises as to whether managers from different cultures differentially value task performance and citizenship performance when evaluating overall job performance. Answers to this question can advance performance management theory and practices within a global context. In this investigation, we include the cultural value of collectivism and conduct a study using both Canadian and Chinese samples.

2.3. Cultural Values and Importance of Task Performance vs. OCB

Collectivism is one of the most widely examined cultural value orientations and has been found to relate to a number of variables, such as self-concept, relationality, attribution and cognitive style (Oyserman et al., 2002). Moorman and Blakely (1995) found that individuals higher on collectivism showed more OCBs than those lower on collectivism. Van Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham and Cummings (2000) reported that collectivism positively predicted self-reported OCB six months later. Triandis (1990) maintains that the essence of individualism vs. collectivism is the preference for group goals vs. individual goals. Oyserman et al (2002) reviewed and content-analyzed collectivism scales and individualism scales in their literature. They reported that the bulk of collectivism measured “sense of duty to group” (85%), “relatedness to others” (74%), “seeking advice” (65%), “harmony” (57%) and “working in groups” (57%). They concluded that “a sense of obligation and duty to the group” constitutes the core element of collectivism. The individualism scale items analyzed by Oyserman et al (2002) had a heavy content emphasis on “personal independence” (83%), “personal achievement” (33%), self-knowledge” (33%) and “uniqueness” (30%). They concluded that the core element

of individualism is “valuing personal independence”.

Thus, it can be inferred that managers high on collectivism tend to value behaviours that support other organizational members, including being cooperative, maintaining interpersonal harmony, and helping co-workers — reflecting the behavioural domain comprising OCB-interpersonal. These managers are also likely to value behaviours that support group goals and the well being of the work unit, such as loyalty to group, participating in unit/organizational activities, defending unit/organizational objectives, offering suggestions to promote the effective functioning of the unit/organization — all reflecting the behavioural domain of OCB-organizational. In contrast, managers high on individualism tend to value workplace behaviours that distinguish one employee from another, such as exemplary personal achievement, and that most directly support task performance (e.g. behaviours most facilitative of high quality task completion, such as working overtime and conscientious attention to task quality). Hence, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. A: collectivism relates positively to the degree to which OCB-interpersonal behaviours are considered important to evaluate others’ overall job performance.

Hypothesis 1. B: collectivism relates positively to the degree to which OCB-organizational behaviours are considered important in evaluating others’ overall job performance.

2.4. Nationality and Importance of Task Performance vs. OCB

Chinese citizens tend to hold collectivist values, while American and Canadian citizens tend to hold more individualistic values (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Oyserman et al., 2002). People with a collectivist orientation are likely to value more highly pro-social behaviours of the sort typically classified as OCB, than are people who hold more of an individualistic value orientation. Research on role-definition examines whether OCB is considered part of an employees’ job expectation. Blakely, Srivastava and Moorman (2005) compared 116 Chinese managers and 109 US managers and found that the Chinese were more likely than their US counterparts to define OCB as part of their job. Lam, Hui, and Law (1999) also reported that managers from Hong Kong considered sportsmanship (a form of OCB representing the willingness of the employee to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining) and courtesy (a form of OCB aiming at preventing work related problems with others from occurring) as an expected part of the subordinates’ work role more than the participants from the US and Australia.

In contrast, people with an individualistic orientation are more likely to value individual task performance and achievement, as compared to collectivists. Accordingly, we expected native Canadians to place greater emphasis on task performance, and less emphasis on OCB, than native Chinese, when considering the overall job performance of others. Indirect evidence in support of these expectations comes from research demonstrating that managers from individualistic

cultures placed more emphasis on individual task performance than managers from collectivistic cultures when they made compensation decisions (Bond and Leung, 1982). Moreover, Zhou and Martocchio (2001) demonstrated that Chinese managers placed less emphasis on individual task performance when making bonus decisions and more emphasis on individuals' relationships with coworkers and managers when making non-monetary decisions.

Consistent with these findings, and their underlying logic, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2.A: Chinese respondents rate OCB-interpersonal behaviour and OCB - organizational behaviour as more important to assessing others' overall job performance than their Canadian counterparts.

Hypothesis 2.B: Chinese respondents rate task performance and OCB-task to be less important to assessing others' overall job performance than their Canadian counterparts.

3. Method

3.1. Sample

Our sample was comprised of 149 Business Administration (MBA) students registered in a mid-sized university located in Southwestern Ontario, Canada. Of that, 134 usable responses were obtained. Students from countries other than Canada and China were excluded in the data analysis, resulting in a final sample of 126. Among these respondents, there were 90 Chinese students (71%) and 36 Canadian students (29%); 75 were males (60%) and 51 were females (40%); the average age of these respondents was 29 years. Participants averaged 5.0 years of work experience, 2.0 years of managerial experience, and 1.9 years of performance appraisal experience.

3.2. Procedure and Measures

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of task behaviours and OCB to their overall judgment of others' job performance. Their ratings were done on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 6 (very important). The task performance scale comprised 11 items, six from Belfort and Hatrup (2003), and five from Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item is "completes job duties in a timely manner". The OCB scale comprised of 56 items. Twenty-seven items were taken from the OCB scale developed primarily in North America by Coleman and Borman (2000) and 29 were taken from the OCB scale developed by Zhong and Farh (2003) using Chinese samples. Sample items include "arrives and starts work earlier than official work time" and "helps other organization members". Four items measuring social welfare participation in Zhong and Farh's original scale were removed because these factors are unique to state owned enterprises in China. Collectivism was measured using 5 items developed by Yoo and Donthu (2002) on a 7-point Likert scale. A sample item is "group success is

more important than individual success”.

We also controlled the cultural value of power distance using the 6 item measure by Yoo and Donthu (2002) on a 7-point Likert scale. Power distance indicates the extent to which power in work, family and society is unequally distributed with more powerful people being more authoritarian and decisive. A sample item is “people in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions”. It has been shown that China represents a higher power distance culture than U.S. and Canada (Hofstede, 1980).

We computed composite scores by unit weighting the scale items for task performance ($\alpha = .81$); OCB-interpersonal ($\alpha = .85$), -organizational ($\alpha = .89$); and -task ($\alpha = .78$); collectivism ($\alpha = .77$); and power distance ($\alpha = .74$). We also collected information on respondent’s gender, age, full-time paid work experience, number of years in managerial positions, and years of experience doing performance appraisals.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations for study variables. As shown in Table 1, collectivism is related positively to OCB-interpersonal ($r = .40, p < .01$) and OCB-organizational ($r = .37, p < .01$). In contrast, power distance is related more weakly to both variables ($r = .15, p < .10$ and $r = .04, p > .10$ respectively). Chinese respondents attached more importance than their Canadian counterparts to OCB-interpersonal ($r = .19, p < .05$) and OCB-organizational ($r = .20, p < .05$). Consistent with past literature, Chinese respondents are higher on power distance ($r = .18, p < .05$) than their Canadian counterparts. However, they are not higher on collectivism ($r = .01, p > .10$), in discrepancy with past research.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Inter-Correlations among Variables

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Collectivism	4.22	1.04	(.77)										
2.Power distance	2.65	1.09	.21*	(.74)									
3.Task performance	4.85	.59	.23*	.18*	(.81)								
4.OCB-task	4.05	.54	.27**	.01	.41**	(.78)							
5.OCB-interpersonal	3.87	.59	.40**	.15†	.30**	.63**	(.85)						
6.OCB-organizational	4.19	.60	.37**	.04	.49**	.69**	.64**	(.89)					
7.Nationality	.71	.45	.01	.18*	-.13	-.01	.19*	.20*	—				
8.Gender	.40	.49	-.16†	-.12	.08	-.02	-.13	.03	.24*	—			
9. Age	28.63	3.71	-.02	.13	-.13	-.01	.09	.02	.36**	-.18*	—		
10. Work experience	5.00	3.67	.05	.06	-.04	.02	.16†	.03	.28*	-.13	.87**	—	
11. Managerial experience	1.97	2.19	.03	.13	-.04	.04	.10	.03	.38**	-.05	.67**	.71**	—
12. Performance appraisal experience	1.85	1.85	.05	.01	-.06	.07	.14	.07	.24*	-.02	.56**	.62**	.68**

Note: coefficient alphas reported on diagonal; † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; Male coded as 0 and female coded as 1; Canadians coded as 0 and Chinese coded as 1; N = 126.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regressions Using Power Distance, Collectivism and Nationality as Predictors of Importance Ratings of Task Performance, OCB-Organizational, -Interpersonal and –Task.

	Task performance				OCB-task			
	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step4	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step4
Gender	.06	.09	.07	.13	-.03	-.03	-.03	.02
Age	-.38*	-.31	-.28	-.16	-.14	-.14	-.15	-.02
Work experience	.30	.27	.24	.13	.06	.06	.06	-.04
Managerial experience	.03	.07	.09	.11	.04	.04	.03	.05
Performance appraisal experience	-.06	-.07	-.08	-.11	.08	.08	.09	.06
Nationality		-.13	-.11	-.13		.01	.00	-.02
Power distance			-.14	-.20*			.02	-.04
Collectivism				.29**				.28**
R ²	.04	.06	.07	.15*	.01	.01	.01	.08
R ² _{Adjusted}	.00	.01	.02	.09	-.03	-.04	-.05	.02
ΔR ²		.01	.02	.08**		.00	.00	.07**
	OCB - interpersonal				OCB - organizational			
	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step4	Step1	Step2	Step3	Step4
Gender	-.13	-.22*	-.20*	-.14	.03	-.05	-.05	.03
Age	-.22	-.36†	-.38*	-.24	-.03	-.16	-.16	.01
Work experience	-.31	.39*	.42*	.29	.02	.09	.10	-.04
Managerial experience	-.05	-.14	-.16	-.14	-.02	-.10	-.10	-.08
Performance appraisal experience	.10	.12	.14	.10	.08	.10	.10	.07
Nationality		.29**	.26*	.24*		.25*	.25*	.22*
Power distance			.13	.05			.02	-.07
Collectivism				.34**				.39**
R ²	.05	.11*	.13*	.23**	.00	.05	.05	.19**
R ² _{Adjusted}	.02	.07	.08	.18	-.04	.01	.00	.13
ΔR ²		.06**	.02	.10**		.05*	.00	.14**

Note: Standardized Betas (β) are reported; † p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; N = 126; Male coded as 0 and female coded as 1; Canadians coded as 0 and Chinese coded as 1.

Table 2 presents the results of hierarchical regressions. Specifically, we regressed separately the important ratings (for task performance and for each of the OCB-task, - interpersonal and -organizational) on: Step1) gender, age, work experience, managerial experience and performance appraisal experience; Step2) nationality; Step3) power distance, and Step4) collectivism.

We hypothesized that higher collectivism would be associated with greater importance assigned to OCB-interpersonal and OCB-organizational in evaluations of overall job performance. As shown in Table 2, collectivism was a significant predictor of OCB-interpersonal (β = .34, p < .01) and OCB-organizational (β = .39, p < .01). Moreover, collectivism explained unique variance (over and above the demographic and work experiences block, nationality and power distance) in OCB-interpersonal (ΔR² = .10, p < .01) and for OCB-organizational (ΔR² = .14,

$p < .01$). These findings suggest that a collectivistic value orientation is positively associated with the degree to which individuals rate these two dimensions of OCB as important in their assessment of others' overall job performance and can explain much difference in the importance managers attach to OCB-interpersonal and OCB-organizational in their performance evaluation decisions.

With respect to hypothesis 2.A, Table 2 shows that, with demographic and work experience variables controlled, nationality related positively to the degree to which OCB-interpersonal ($\beta = .26, p < .05$) and OCB-organizational ($\beta = .25, p < .05$) were rated important in assessments of others' overall job performance. Nationality explained significantly unique variance in both dimensions of OCB beyond the demographic and work experiences block (OCB-interpersonal, $\Delta R^2 = .06, p < .01$; OCB-organizational, $\Delta R^2 = .05, p < .01$). Clearly, the native Chinese assigned higher importance to these two dimensions of OCB than the native Canadians. Accordingly, hypothesis 2a was supported.

With respect to hypothesis 2.B, native Chinese, as compared to their native Canadian counterparts, were expected to rate task performance and OCB-task less important in their assessment of the overall job performance of others. But this hypothesis was not supported. For example, although nationality related negatively ($\beta = -.13$), Table 2 shows that after controlling for demographic and work experience variables (the important ratings for task performance), the relationship was not statistically significant ($p > .10$). In addition, nationality was not related to OCB-task ($\beta = .01, p > .10$).

Tables 2 shows that even after controlling for the demographic and work experience variables, collectivism and power distance, the effects of nationality remains significant for OCB-organizational and OCB-interpersonal. From these findings the question arises: "What other factors underlie nationality differences beyond our measures of demographic variables, work experiences, collectivism and power distance?"

We did not offer specific hypothesis regarding the relationship between collectivism and important ratings of task performance and OCB-task, although our results showed that they were associated positively with collectivism. However, collectivism was associated more strongly with important ratings of OCB-interpersonal ($\beta = .34, p < .01$) and OCB -organizational ($\beta = .39, p < .01$) than with task performance ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) and OCB-task ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). These findings are consistent with the logic underlying our hypothesis.

5. Discussion

This study provides evidence that the importance given to task and OCB in evaluations of others' overall job performance may depend on evaluators' cultural values and differ cross-culturally. Our results suggest that individuals holding a more collectivist value orientation are likely to assign greater importance to OCB-interpersonal and -organizational in their evaluations of overall performance,

compared to individuals lower in collectivist value orientation. However, our results also suggest that Chinese-Canadian differences in the assigned importance of task versus OCB remain even when cross-cultural differences in collectivism, power distance, and demographic and work experience variables are held constant. Identifying the factors underlying this nationality effect is a potentially fruitful path for future research to follow. While our literature review is suggestive that individualism relates positively to the importance assigned to task performance and task conscientiousness, we did not measure individualism per se. Perhaps individualism would account for some of the nationality effect we observed.

Differences between native Chinese and Canadian managers in the perceived importance/contribution of task versus OCB to overall job performance have practical implications. Specifically, to the extent that these different values are shared among workers, misunderstandings between a Canadian expatriate manager and Chinese workers (and vice-versa), over unstated differences in how task and OCB are valued and rated can cause conflict. Management should be trained to use a common frame of reference on the relevant importance of task and OCB to overall performance when objectivity and fairness of the performance appraisal is sought and the potential manager-employee conflict is to be avoided.

Multiple nation studies on OCB that consider both nationality and cultural values can be counted on one's fingers (Farh et al., 2009). Thus, the strengths of this study lie in its inclusion of nationality and cultural values in a single study and collection of data from both a Canadian sample and a Chinese sample. However, caution needs to be taken to generalize these findings. For example, these findings need to be assessed on larger and more culturally diverse samples. Although most respondents in our sample had considerable previous work experience, we concur that "caution must be exercised when attempting to extend any relationship found using college student subjects to a nonstudent (adult) population" (Peterson, 2001, p. 450). Thus studies with samples beyond students are encouraged to replicate the current investigation. Moreover, the cross-culture differences might have been underestimated given that the Chinese sample in this study may have begun to reflect some of the host culture values, making a true test of cultural values difficult (Flere and Lavric, 2008). Future research should also ascertain whether subject's reports of what they believe to be important are reflected in the actual performance assessments and identify additional variables besides collectivism and power distance that can account for cross-cultural differences in importance attached to task performance and dimensions of citizenship behaviours.

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