Cross-Cultural Study of Effect of Personality on Work Culture

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Abstract— A sample of 25 university students and professors was chosen to analyze effect of personality traits, leadership style and formality of communication on affection towards work culture in India and abroad. All the subjects chosen have had experience of working in India as well as abroad and hence the results obtained could be used to compare the effects in both environments. A survey of questionnaire was carried out and the answers were then scored and analyzed using regression analysis. The coefficients obtained after regression analysis showed that neuroticism and formality of communication were the most determining factors. Psychoticism, extroversion and lie showed opposite correlations with work culture in India and abroad. Democratic leadership was the most preferred form of leadership in both environments whereas laissez faire leadership was despised in both work environments.

Keywords— Communication Climate, Extroversion, Formality of Communication, Neuroticism, Psychoticism, Work Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational work culture refers to a set of shared mental assumptions that guide actions in organizations and define appropriate behavior for various situations (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). In larger organizations, diverse and sometimes conflicting cultures co-exist. The organizational work culture may have both negative and positive aspects. With the growth of several of these large multi-cultural organizations in recent times, understanding the factors affecting work culture has become a key to success.

The role of personality traits in work related behaviors has received renewed interest over the past two decades (Furnham & Premuzic., 2005; Salgado, 1997). Research has shown that there are robust associations between certain personality traits and work values (Furnham et al, 2005). The most preferred way to study this relationship in the past has been through survey (Furnham et al, 2005; Kubat and Kuruuzum, 2009). There have also been suggestions that one’s personality traits can predict educational and occupational success (Sarnswang, 1995).

Quite frequently, modern working people in India face a conflicting situation in life: Settling in large MNC’s abroad and exploring growth opportunities or staying with their family in their homeland and working in a comfortable environment. It is useful, for decision making, if one has had prior experience of working abroad for some period of time. However, the final decision is influenced greatly by whether the individual’s personality suits the work culture abroad. The effect of various personality traits on fondness towards work culture in India and abroad has been studied here in greater detail.

II. HYPOTHESIS

H0: Personality traits, leadership style and formality of communication have no impact on affection towards work culture in India as well as abroad.
H1: Neuroticism is negatively correlated with work culture both in India as well as abroad at 5% significance
H2: Psychoticism is positively correlated with work culture in India and negatively related with work culture abroad at 5% significance
H3: Extroversion is negatively correlated with work culture in India and positively related with work culture abroad at 5% significance
H4: Lie is negatively correlated with work culture in India and positively related with work culture abroad at 5% significance
H5: Democratic leadership is positively correlated with work culture both in India as well as abroad at 10% significance
H6: Laissez Faire leadership is negatively correlated with work culture both in India as well as abroad at 10% significance
H7: Informality in communication is negatively correlated with work culture in India and positively related with work culture abroad at 5% significance

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen for studying impact of personality on work culture was survey research. The procedure was divided into four steps:
- Design of survey questionnaire
- Selection of sampling frame
- Distribution of survey for collection of data
- Interpretation of data

A. Design of Survey Questionnaire

A short survey questionnaire was designed based on literature review to establish relationship between the variables (work culture of the location and individual’s psychology). However, previous research suggested that the traits of an individual would also affect the individual’s
psychology towards his/her work culture. Hence, a general personality test (EPQ Test) was also appended to the questionnaire to study the impact of traits on his/her choices to the questions in the survey.

A sample of the survey questionnaire and EPQ Test are attached in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

B. Selection of Sample Elements

The factors kept in mind while selecting the sample elements were:

- Subjects must have worked in India as well as abroad.
- Subjects of both genders must be selected.
- Subjects should have experienced work environment in different countries.
- Subjects should cover all major personality traits.
- The number of subjects present in the sample must be at least 30.

Hence, the subjects chosen were university students and professors from Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi who have done internship or employment abroad.

C. Distribution of survey for collection of data

The survey questionnaire was distributed using online and paper media. The survey was made available to around 100 undergraduates who have done internship or training abroad. The number of responses to the survey in total was 25, out of which 20 were males and 5 were females. The subjects had work experience in 10 countries in 4 continents apart from India. The subjects also covered high and low levels of major psychological traits like neuroticism, extroversion and psychotics.

D. Interpretation of data

The scoring pattern followed for the questionnaire is attached in Appendix C.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Result

The regression model set up for analysis and the corresponding results, for work culture abroad and work culture in India respectively, are as shown below:

1. Work culture abroad:

\[ \text{score}_{\text{Abroad}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{neuroticism} + \beta_2 \text{psychoticism} + \beta_3 \text{extroversion} + \beta_4 \text{lie} + \beta_5 \text{democratic}_{\text{Abroad}} + \beta_6 \text{laissezfaire}_{\text{Abroad}} + \beta_7 \text{informality}_o f_{\text{communication}}_{\text{Abroad}} + u \]

\[ \text{R-squared} = 0.6796 \]
\[ \sigma^2 = 2.5988 \]
\[ \text{standard error} = 1.6121 \]

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<th>Beta Coefficient</th>
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2. Work Culture in India

\[ \text{score}_{\text{India}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{neuroticism} + \beta_2 \text{psychoticism} + \beta_3 \text{extroversion} + \beta_4 \text{lie} + \beta_5 \text{democratic}_{\text{India}} + \beta_6 \text{laissezfaire}_{\text{India}} + \beta_7 \text{informality}_o f_{\text{communication}}_{\text{India}} + u \]

\[ \text{R-squared} = 0.7128 \]
\[ \sigma^2 = 2.2633 \]
\[ \text{standard error} = 1.5044 \]

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B. Inference

1. Beta0:

Beta0 is a significant contributor to both scores due to nature of scoring and rating. Beta0 is much higher for scores in India than abroad. Hence, if there was no impact of individual psychology on work culture, then India would have been a more favourable destination to work. However, average score for India (14.92) is much lower than that abroad (17.60). Therefore, individual psychology has an impact on evaluation of work culture.

2. Beta1:

Neuroticism is negatively correlated with work culture both in India and abroad. It is also the most significant contributor of all personality traits, which is also intuitive as it harms team building. It has more significant impact abroad because
individuals work out of their comfort zone. This leads to greater anxiousness.

3. Beta2:
Psychoticism is significantly negatively correlated with work culture abroad, whereas it is slightly positively correlated with work culture in India. This can be attributed to the fact that individuals are tentative towards taking risks when abroad because they are unaware of the culture and want to be accepted by the group. However, when in India, they are prepared to take risks easily and don’t mind being asocial.

4. Beta3:
Extroversion is significantly positively correlated with work culture abroad, whereas it is significantly negatively correlated with work culture in India. Extroverts usually enjoy company of people from abroad as there is more of party culture, adventure sports, etc. associated with western culture. However, in India, work culture is more monotonous and boring, especially in government institutions. Hence, extroverts have a slightly hard time.

5. Beta4:
Lie is not a significant trait contributing to the evaluation of work culture in India or abroad. However, it was found to be positively correlated with work culture abroad and slightly negatively correlated with work culture in India. This can be justified since lying is related to social desirability. There is little need for social desirability while working in India, especially among researchers. However, when they visit abroad, there is a need for social desirability as reflected in the scores.

6. Beta5:
Democratic leadership is also not a significant contributor to direct scores for work culture. However, the positive correlation, for both work cultures in India and Abroad, reinforces the fact that it is the most preferred form of leadership.

7. Beta6:
Laissez Faire leadership is also not significantly related to direct scores. However, in both cases, it was negatively correlated with scores. This can be attributed to the fact that almost the entire sample consisted of students who need guidance during an internship/project. Hence, they tend to despise Laissez Faire leadership.

8. Beta7:
Informality in communication is a significant contributor to the scores both for India and abroad. It is positively correlated to work culture abroad but negatively correlated to work culture in India. The main reason for the same is the general cultural differences between India and western countries. While working abroad, an individual feels comfortable talking informally with co-workers or supervisors and can easily share personal feelings. However, while working in India, an individual feels hesitant to talk informally and share feelings due to social prejudice. This could also be the main reason why average scores for work culture abroad (17.60) are higher than those for work culture in India (14.92).

V. Conclusion
The analysis showed that, both in India and abroad, an individual’s personality traits, the type of leadership as well as communication environment play an important role in influencing how much he/she likes the work environment. When the influence of personality traits, leadership style and communication climate were neglected, the average scores for fondness towards work culture (Beta0) was 22.10 for India and 11.97 abroad. However, when we take these variables into account, the net average scores were 14.92 for India and 17.60 abroad. Among all personality traits, neuroticism (Beta1) was the most influencing variable. It was negatively correlated to work culture both in India and abroad. This is because it causes anxiousness and harms team building. Psychoticism (Beta2) was significantly negatively correlated with work culture abroad, whereas it was slightly positively correlated with work culture in India. Individuals are in their comfort zone while working in India and are prepared to take risks but they are tentative in taking risks abroad. Extroversion (Beta 3) was significantly positively correlated with work culture abroad, whereas it was significantly negatively correlated with work culture in India. This can be attributed to extroverts enjoying the culture of party, adventure sports, etc abroad and not liking the monotonous work culture in India. Lie (Beta4) was not a significant trait contributing to the evaluation of work culture in India or abroad. However, it was found to be positively correlated with work culture abroad and slightly negatively correlated with work culture in India. This is due to more of a sense of social desirability abroad than in India. Democratic leadership (Beta5) was also not a significant contributor to direct scores for work culture. However, it showed positive correlation with both work cultures in India and abroad. Laissez Faire leadership (Beta6) was also not significantly related to direct scores. However, in both cases, it was negatively correlated with scores. It reinforced that democratic is the most preferred type of leadership style in India as well as abroad. Informality in communication (Beta 7) was a significant contributor to the scores both for India and abroad. It was positively correlated to work culture abroad but negatively correlated to work culture in India. This is mainly due to cultural differences between various western countries and India. This could also be the main reason why average scores for work culture abroad (17.60) were higher than those for work culture in India (14.92).

APPENDIX
A. APPENDIX A
Sample survey questionnaire:
1. Does your mood often go up and down?
2. Do you take much notice of what people think?
3. Are you a talkative person?
4. If you say you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how inconvenient it might be?
5. Do you ever feel ‘just miserable’ for no reason?
6. Would being in debt worry you?
7. Are you rather lively?
8. Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything?
9. Are you an irritable person?
10. Would you take drugs which may have strange or dangerous effects?
11. Do you enjoy meeting new people?
12. Have you every blamed someone for doing something you knew was really your fault?
13. Are your feelings easily hurt?
14. Do you prefer to go your own way rather than act by the rules?
15. Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party?
16. Are all your habits good and desirable ones?
17. Do you often feel ‘fed-up’?
18. Do good manners and cleanliness matter much to you?
19. Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?
20. Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or button) that belonged to someone else?
21. Would you call yourself a nervous person?
22. Do you think marriage is old-fashioned and should be done away with?
23. Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?
24. Have you ever broken or lost something belonging to someone else?
25. Are you a worrier?
26. Do you enjoy co-operating with others?
27. Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?
28. Does it worry you if you know there are mistakes in your work?
29. Have you ever said anything bad or nasty about anyone?
30. Would you call yourself tense or 'highly strung'?
31. Do you think people spend too much time safeguarding their future with savings and insurance?
32. Do you like mixing with people?
33. As a child were you very cheeky to your parents?
34. Do you worry too long after an embarrassing experience?
35. Do you try not to be rude to people?
36. Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?
37. Have you ever cheated at a game?
38. Do you suffer from 'nerves'?
39. Would you like other people to be afraid of you?
40. Have you ever taken advantage of someone?
41. Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?
42. Do you often feel lonely?
43. Is it better to follow society’s rules than go your own way?
44. Do other people think of you as being very lively?
45. Do you always practice what you preach?
46. Are you often troubled about feelings of guilt?
47. Do you sometimes put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today?
48. Can you get a party going?

C. APPENDIX C

Scoring pattern followed for survey questionnaire:
- Time to have at least 1 interaction with each member in the group:
  0-1 days - 5 points, 2-4 days - 3 points, 4-7 days - 1 point, >7 days - 0 points
  - On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable was the group with your inclusion:
    5 - 5 points, 4- 4 points, 3- 3 points, 2- 2 points, 1- 1 point
  - On a scale of 1-5, how helpful were your co-workers:
    5 - 5 points, 4- 4 points, 3- 3 points, 2- 2 points, 1- 1 point
  - How often did you celebrate with your colleagues?:
    6-7 times a week - 5 points, 3-5 times a week - 4 points, 1-2 times a week - 3 points, Occasionally - 2 points, Never - 1 point
  - On a scale of 1-5, how dependent were you on your supervisor?:
    5 - 5 points, 4- 4 points, 3 - 3 points, 2 - 2 points, 1 (Completely Independent)- 2 points, 1 (Completely dependent) - 1 point
  - How open was the communication climate:
    The attitude of different individual towards the nature of communication climate may be varying. Hence, this question was used as a separate independent variable while finding correlation with work culture. Separate dummy variables were used in the regression equation for determining nature of communication climate: Democratic, Laissez Faire, Authoritarian
  - On a scale of 1-5, how formal was the communication:
    The attitude of different individual towards formal/informal communication may be varying. Hence, this question was also used as a separate independent variable while finding correlation with work culture. The formality of communication was measured in 5 degrees
    1 (Extremely Formal), 2, 3, 4, 5 (Extremely Informal)

Finally, the scores obtained were correlated with the traits observed through EPQ test (i.e. Neuroticism, Extroversion, Psychotics and Lying) and independent variables for communication climate and formality of communication.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr Snehlata Jaswal for her continuous and unfailing support, guidance and help, which have been invaluable during the course of this project. Her knowledge, insight and constant motivation at each step of the project have been instrumental in its completion.

REFERENCES