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Individualism–collectivism orientation and employee attitudes: A comparison of employees from the high-technology sector in India and Ireland [☆]

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Abstract

In this study, we examined the effects of individualism–collectivism (I/C) orientations on organizational commitment (affective and normative), tenure intent, and willingness to expend effort among Indian and Irish employees. Results indicated that Indians exhibited higher willingness to expend effort, affective and normative commitments than the Irish employees. Irish employees, however, reported higher tenure intent than Indians. The self-reliance dimension of I/C predicted commitment and tenure intent in the hypothesized direction. The competitiveness dimension of I/C predicted tenure intent in the hypothesized direction but predicted commitments and effort opposite to the hypothesized direction. Supremacy of individual goals dimension of I/C predicted effort and solitary work preference

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dimension of I/C predicted effort and normative commitment in the expected directions. Implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Since Hofstede's (1980) work on national cultures, the role of individualistic versus collectivist values in influencing the work attitudes of employees has been studied extensively. While Hofstede (1980, 1984) proposed that individualism–collectivism (I/C) is a uni-dimensional, bipolar cultural value, subsequent studies (e.g., Parkes et al., 2001; Ramamoorthy and Flood, 2002; Wagner, 1995) have treated I/C as a multi-dimensional individual difference variable and examined their effects on employee attitudes such as commitment, tenure intent, loyalty, pro-social behavior, etc. Consistent with the suggestions of Hofstede (1992) that management practices differ across cultures, several studies have examined the fit between I/C values of individual employees and their work values both cross-culturally (e.g., Parkes et al., 2001) and at the individual level (Ramamoorthy and Carroll, 1998). The work attitudes that I/C orientations seem to affect include team loyalty, pro-social behaviors, attitudes towards a variety of HRM practices such as performance appraisal, reward systems, staffing practices, cooperation, effort, commitment, and tenure intent (Clugston et al., 2000; Gomez-Mejia and Wellbourne, 1991; Moorman, 1991; Moorman and Blakely, 1995; Parkes et al., 2001; Ramamoorthy and Carroll, 1998; Ramamoorthy and Flood, 2002; Ramamoorthy et al., 2005; Sosik and Jung, 2001; Wagner, 1995).

Although cultural differences may exist across cultures, a few studies have suggested that global organizations may still be able to find a fit between employees and their managerial practices to the extent intra-cultural variations on I/C at the individual levels may exist (Parkes et al., 2001; Ramamoorthy and Carroll, 1998; Ramamoorthy and Flood, 2002). These studies also show that the multi-dimensional nature of I/C may manifest itself in terms of relative emphases placed on competitiveness versus cooperativeness, focus on individual versus group, equity versus equality, and independence versus interdependence. In light of these suggestions, the goals of the present study are: (1) Do work attitudes differ between India and Ireland that may arise out of individualistic values of Irish and collectivist values of Indian employees as reported in prior research (Hofstede, 1980)? (2) Do intra-cultural variations on I/C orientations of employees predict their work attitudes? In doing so, we are hypothesizing and treating I/C as a multi-dimensional individual difference variable consistent with prior research (Kagitcibasi, 1994; Schwartz, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Triandis et al., 1990). For this study, we chose the following work attitudes: affective commitment, normative commitment, willingness to expend extra effort on the job (extra effort) and intention to stay with the organization (tenure intent). Prior research shows that these attitudes are valued by organizations and may impact a variety of organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover, teamwork and productivity.

Our study should be of considerable interest to researchers and managers for the following reasons: First, organizational commitment, extra effort, and tenure intent have been shown to have desirable behavioral consequences, such as performance, employee retention, attendance and citizenship behaviors (e.g., Allen and Meyer, 1996; Clugston et al., 2000; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Milkovich and Newman, 2005). Second, we examine the cultural influence at the *national*, as well

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