How do Cultural Types Affect Work-Related Attitudes? The Mediating Role of Perceived Organisational Support

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This study uses the horizontal and vertical distinction within individualism and collectivism (i.e., four cultural types) as a theoretical framework to predict differences in organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Five hundred and fourteen solicitors working in law firms in Hong Kong participated in this study. Results of regression analysis indicated that horizontal-individualism (HI) had a significant negative effect and horizontal-collectivism (HC) had a significant positive effect on organisational commitment. Both horizontal and vertical collectivism had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. These relationships were found to be mediated by perceived organisational support (POS). We discuss the implications of our findings and suggest future research directions.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have begun showing interest in how cultural values affect work attitudes (for example, organisational commitment and job satisfaction) at the individual level (Wang, Bishop, Chen, and Scott, 2002; Wasti, 2003). In much of the previous research, researchers
compared the differences in individuals’ work attitudes between countries in order to draw conclusions on the impact of national culture (Near, 1989; Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang, and Lawler, 2005). This approach limits our understanding of the exact influence of culture on job attitudes, and the mechanisms behind the relationship remain largely unknown. We believe that measuring national cultural types (i.e., Triandis’s (1995, 2004) horizontal and vertical individualism—collectivism) will capture an individual’s work orientation and hence explain his or her job attitudes.

Individuals with different cultural values may have different goals, expectations, and needs. at work (Hofstede, 2001; Ngo, Foley, and Loi, 2006), and their perceptions of organisational support are likely to vary. Perceived organisational support (POS) has been found to positively affect organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch, 1997; Loi, Ngo, and Foley, 2006; Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli, 2001), based on the theory of social exchange and the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1961). POS may be one of the mechanisms (i.e., a mediating variable) that accounts for the influence of cultural values on work attitudes. We argue that workers with different cultural types will have different perceptions of organisational support, which in turn affect their job satisfaction and commitment to their organisation.

Our sample of professional lawyers in Hong Kong provides an excellent setting to conduct the research. Hong Kong is a place where East meets West (i.e., collectivism meets individualism). Individuals with different countries of origin and cultural backgrounds are working together in Hong Kong. Their orientations and perceptions at work tend to be diverse, thus we can assess the extent to which individuals differ according to cultural type within one sample. The use of one professional group, solicitors, controls for the possible effects of occupational characteristics and allows us to evaluate the effects of cultural types on work attitudes. We anticipate that our findings will provide insights into the meaning of these work-related attitudes in an Asian setting.

In this study, we predict that the level of organisational commitment and job satisfaction varies across the horizontal and
vertical varieties of individualism and collectivism. We further examine the yet untested role of POS as a mediator of the relationship between the four cultural types and these positive work attitudes. We generate hypotheses based on theories and concepts such as the equality criterion of distributive justice (Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry, 1980), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), group socialisation theory (Harris, 1995), and research on professional service firms (for example, Ibarra, 2000; Malos and Campion, 1995). Our study contributes to the cross-cultural management literature in the following ways: (1) We focus on within-culture variation which enables us to investigate the effects of cultural types within a culture, (2) we look at how and why the horizontal-vertical distinction within individualism and collectivism is an important predictor of work-related attitudes, (3) we extend the literature on POS by considering it as a mediating variable in our model, and (4) we contribute to the research on professional service firms by studying the perceptions of practicing solicitors in Hong Kong.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Types

According to Group Socialisation (GS) Theory, culture is not transmitted on an individual-to-individual basis (for example, from parent or teacher to child), but rather from group-to-group (for example, the parents’ group to the children’s group) (Harris, 1995). Harris (1995) argues that the cultural transmission that occurs in childhood and adolescence (outside the family and in the presence of peers) persists throughout adulthood. Thus, according to GS theory, the culture in which we grow up is one of the most important predictors of adult personality, attitudes, and behaviours.

Individualism and collectivism are two important dimensions in studying cultural differences (Triandis, 2001; 2004). The individualism and collectivism constructs describe a ‘cultural syndrome’ or social
pattern in which individualists tend to give priority to individual goals and collectivists place more emphasis on group goals (Triandis, 1995: 43). Individualism and collectivism influence people’s perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Triandis, 1995), thus they are worthy of study.

Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995) and Triandis (1995) proposed the vertical-horizontal (V-H) categories as a further conceptualisation of individualism and collectivism. Both individualism and collectivism may be horizontal (emphasising equality) or vertical (emphasising hierarchy), a viable and important distinction (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). The V-H distinction tracks important differences in the way that people view the self, contributes to understanding a culture’s value system (Maheswaran and Shavitt, 2000), and provides additional insights into cross-cultural research in organisational Behaviour (Chen and Li, 2005). Verticals perceive themselves as different from members of the in-group, whereas horizontals perceive themselves as the same as others in their in-group (Soh and Leong, 2002). Individuals who are high on the vertical dimension emphasise hierarchy and accept social order and inequality among people; individuals who are high on the horizontal dimension emphasise equality and believe that everyone should have equal rights and status (Soh and Leong, 2002). The combinations of these four patterns or types can be characterised as horizontal individualists (HI) who are independent/same status, horizontal collectivists (HC) who are interdependent/same status, vertical individualists (VI) who are independent/different status, and vertical collectivists (VC) who are interdependent/ different status (Singelis et al, 1995). An individual will use all four of these patterns depending on the situation, although people tend to become comfortable with a cultural type they use frequently and will try to use that type in most situations (Triandis, 1995).

The horizontal dimension emphasises equality. According to distributive justice theory, equality is a criterion that individuals use to evaluate the fairness of outcomes (Leventhal et al, 1980). Equality suggests that all individuals should have an equal chance of receiving an outcome, regardless of differentiating characteristics such as
knowledge or ability (Deutsch, 1975). The organisational goal when utilising this criterion is to foster enjoyable and harmonious interactions among employees (Leventhal et al, 1980). The concern is for the attainment and maintenance of a sense of community; individuals try to achieve a sense of membership in a social entity such as an organisation, division, or department (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton, 1992).

The vertical dimension, on the other hand, emphasises hierarchy. The vertical dimension shares some attributes with power distance (Triandis, 1995). Power distance reflects the tendency to perceive a great distance between people in the upper strata and those in the lower strata of society (Hofstede, 2001). A law firm is a good example of power distance or hierarchy between partners and non-partners. Law firm partners share ownership of the firm, and promotion from associate to partner usually brings significant career advancement (Wallace, 1995b). Partners have the power, status and money, whereas associates are subjected to an up-or-out promotion environment. Such a system of promotion to partnership distinguishes law firms from other types of firms in that promotions include only one or two large steps toward partnership, and non-promoted individuals generally leave the organisation (Nelson, 1988). There is even a hierarchy within the partnership rank since in large law firms partners have different positions and power (Wallace, 1995b).

Cultural types may be particularly relevant to understanding individuals’ organisational commitment and job satisfaction, although no research has examined these relationships so far. However, research has been conducted on the relations among individualism, collectivism, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction.

In her review article, Randall (1993) concluded that level of organisational commitment may be lower in more collectivistic countries. Since publication of Randall’s (1993) article, more research has been conducted on cultural values and organisational commitment. For example, Parkes, Bochner, and Schneider (2001) reported that collectivists were more committed than individualists in an Asian organisation because in collectivistic cultures, there are familial relationships, and implicit contracts, between employees and the
organisation. Wang et al (2002) showed that collectivist orientation is an important predictor of affective organisational commitment in China because collectivists have a more salient social identity defined by membership in various social groups such as an organisation. As a result, collectivists are more likely to identify with the organisation and its values, and align their personal interests with that of the organisation. In a recent U.S. study, Clugston, Howell, and Dorfman (2000) found a significant relationship between collectivist orientation and affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organisation and the workgroup. This finding supports the notion that collectivists form close in-group relationships within the workplace, and also form their attachments to the organisation based on loyalty or duty (Clugston et al, 2000). An explanation for the inconsistency between recent findings and Randall’s (1993) conclusions is that the relationship may be influenced (i.e., moderated or mediated) by other factors. Thus, further investigation is needed of the relationship between cultural values and organisational commitment, focusing on identifying possible mechanisms that link them together.

In current literature, the main effect of individualism and collectivism (I—C) on job satisfaction also appears to be inconclusive. For example, Parkes et al (2001) did not predict a direct relationship between I—C and job satisfaction, and their results indicated no relationship between these two constructs. Thomas and Au (2002) found that HI was more likely to respond to low job satisfaction with the behavioural response of voice, whereas VC responded with neglect. They attributed this difference to culturally based normative scripts (or behaviours) that are appropriate in a particular situation (Thomas and Au, 2002). Huang and Van de Vliert (2004) found that job level was positively related to job satisfaction in individualistic countries but not in collectivistic countries, and that job level was negatively related to job satisfaction in jobs with little opportunity to use one’s skills and abilities in collectivistic countries. Their explanation for the moderating effects was that workers in individualistic countries may be socialised to develop higher order needs such as self-actualisation, whereas in collectivistic countries, lower order needs such as security and social affiliation are important (Huang and Van de Vliert, 2004). In their meta-
analysis, Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002) found an interaction effect between social context and I—C on job satisfaction. For example, collectivism was related to job satisfaction when work-related social networks were valued, whereas individualism was related to job satisfaction when the work was self-defining (Oyserman et al, 2002). Given the variety of empirical findings to date, it is important to further explore the relationship between cultural values and job satisfaction.

**PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT (POS)**

In our study, we propose that perceived organisational support (POS) may be important in explaining why cultural types are positively related to attitudes benefiting the organisation (i.e., organisational commitment and job satisfaction). Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986: 501) developed POS which refers to employees’ ‘global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being.’ Employees perceive the personified organisation’s commitment to them and reciprocate their perceptions in the form of their own commitment to the organisation. Eisenberger et al (1986) based the development of POS on the theory of social exchange and the norm of reciprocity (for example, Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). In collectivistic countries, the societal norm is for employers to treat their employees as in-group members, and in return employees repay them in terms of loyalty (Hofstede, 2001). The workplace itself may become an in-group where protection offered by the employer is exchanged for commitment (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, in collectivistic cultures, POS constitutes an important work-related variable (Moideenkutty, Blau, Kumar, and Nalakath, 2001).

Rhoades et al (2001) found that POS was positively related to changes in affective organisational commitment. Chiu and Ng (2001) reported that organisational support was positively linked to organisational commitment in a sample of single female employees in Hong Kong. Eisenberger et al (1997) also found a strong positive relationship between POS and overall job satisfaction.
POS has been found to act as a mediator in past management research. A mediator is a generative mechanism, or transformational process, through which the independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest (Baron and Kenny, 1986). For example, POS mediated the relationship between procedural justice and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) (Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff, 1998), and between developmental experiences/promotions and affective commitment (Wayne, Shore Liden, 1997).

In our study, based on a social exchange perspective, we consider POS a mediating variable that links cultural types with work attitudes. POS may act as a need-satisfying mechanism in that cultural types affect individual’s needs in the workplace, and the fulfilment of certain needs via POS leads to a higher level of organisational commitment (Yamaguchi, 2001). A perception of organisational support specific to an employee’s need (for example, social approval, affiliation, and self-esteem) is valued more than an employee without this specific need (Eisenberger et al, 1986). We expect that different cultural types will be related to the importance an individual places on POS, which in turn affects his/her organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

**Hypotheses Development**

As summarised in our literature review, the findings related to cultural values and work-related attitudes have been inconclusive. We agree with Parkes et al (2001: 86) that ‘theory and logic suggest such a link should exist’, and the following is our explanation of how the variables are related.

Horizontals believe in equality. Individuals who believe in the notion of equality are concerned with cultivating a sense of community and harmony among employees, and a sense of membership in the organisation (Leventhal et al, 1980; Sheppard et al, 1992). It seems likely that, compared to verticals, horizontals will be more committed to the organisation. In particular, among the four cultural types, we expect that HC would have the strongest relationship with organisational
commitment. Horizontal people with collectivist values tend to have a social identity defined by membership in various groups, such as their organisation. As a result, they are more likely to identify with the organisation, internalise its values and interests, and eventually develop commitment to it (Wang et al, 2002).

Unlike individualists who emphasise competition and achievement, collectivists emphasise cooperation, sociability, and good interpersonal relationships (Triandis, 1995), and thus work conflict will be infrequent for them. With less conflict and better human relations in the workplace, we expect that collectivists (both horizontal and vertical) are more satisfied with their jobs than individualists. Moreover, in a law firm, working on client cases is often a team activity. Thus, collectivists who are comfortable in a group setting may be more satisfied with their job.

\[ H1a: \text{ The horizontal dimension (collectivism and individualism) is positively related to organisational commitment.} \]
\[ H1b: \text{ Collectivism (both horizontal and vertical) is positively related to job satisfaction.} \]

Given the wealth of research supporting the relationship between POS and organisational commitment, and POS and job satisfaction (for example, Chiu and Ng, 1999; Eisenberger et al, 1986; Loi et al, 2006; Rhoades et al, 2001; Yamaguchi, 2001), we also predict these relationships.

\[ H2a: \text{ POS is positively related to organisational commitment.} \]
\[ H2b: \text{ POS is positively related to job satisfaction.} \]

Fischer, Ferreira, Assmar, Redford, and Harb (2005) proposed that national culture influences work attitudes and behaviours indirectly through organisational practices. We build on their research and propose POS as a mediating variable between cultural types and organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

There has been some theorising on the relationship between cultural values and POS. For example, Fischer et al (2005) speculated that in
individualistic societies, employees are more interested in tasks than in organisational support for employees. Hence, they may care less about POS. On the other hand, employees in collectivistic countries may be more interested in the security and social affiliation offered by the organisation than in higher order needs such as self-actualisation (Huang and Van de Vliert, 2004). Collectivists may place greater value on POS, particularly when the support from the organisation is able to fulfil their needs of social identity and affiliation. We argue that workers with different cultural types perceive different levels of POS, and hence they have different levels of organisational commitment and job satisfaction. In this way, POS can be viewed a mediator between cultural types and job attitudes. Based on the above arguments, we express our hypotheses as follows:

**H3a**: POS mediates the relationship between the horizontal dimension (collectivism and individualism) and organisational commitment.

**H3b**: POS mediates the relationship between collectivism (both horizontal and vertical) and job satisfaction.

**METHOD**

**Sample and Procedure**

We collected the data for this study from a professional career survey administered to practicing solicitors in Hong Kong. The survey was conducted during the summer of 2002 with the assistance of The Law Society of Hong Kong, which provided us with a full list of its members’ names and addresses. We mailed to each potential respondent a self-administered questionnaire in English, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. We asked respondents to mail the completed questionnaire using the postage-paid return addressed envelope provided. In the first mailing, 4,113 questionnaires were sent out. A follow-up mailing was completed two weeks later in which respondents received a copy of the same questionnaire. Our final
A major issue of mailed surveys is the non-response bias (particularly when the response rate is low) that may affect the generalisability of the findings to the whole population (Fowler, 1993). We used two procedures to address this issue. First, we compared the sample data with the study population on two known values, gender and ethnicity. Within the study population, 64.4 per cent were male and 83.6 per cent were Chinese, which are both comparable to our sample. Second, we compared early and late respondents on major demographic variables, since late respondents tend to be similar to non-respondents (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). Early respondents (i.e., those who returned the questionnaires to us within two weeks) consisted of 86 per cent of our sample. Using t-tests, we found no significant difference between the two groups with respect to gender, ethnicity, job position, and organisational tenure, indicating that non-response bias should not pose a serious threat in the present study.

Among the respondents, 55.4 per cent were male and 44.6 per cent were female. The majority (i.e., 85.9%) was Chinese, and the remaining respondents were Caucasians and other Asian people. Forty-seven per cent fell within the age group of 30-39. Their average organisational and professional tenure were 6.09 years (SD = 6.29 years) and 10.69 years (SD = 7.87 years) respectively. In terms of their job position, 36.2 per cent were partners in their law firms.

**Measures**

All variables, except control variables, were measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’, 6 = ‘strongly agree’).

**Cultural Types**

The four cultural types were assessed by using Soh and Leong’s (2002) 16-item scale, which was an abbreviated scale of the original 32-item scale developed by Singelis et al (1995). The scale has been demonstrated to have adequate reliability, convergent validity, and...
discriminant validity (Gouveia, Clemente, and Espinosa, 2003; Soh and Leong, 2002). In this study, the alpha coefficients for VI, HI, VC, and HC were 0.71, 0.80, 0.74, and 0.74 respectively.

**Perceived Organisational Support**

The construct was measured by a shorter version of six items selected from the scale developed by Eisenberger et al (1986). All items selected have high factor loadings in the original scale. Examples include, ‘My organisation values my contribution to its well-being’ and ‘Help is available from my organisation when I have a problem.’ Cronbach’s alpha for this short scale was 0.93.

**Organisational Commitment**

The eight-item Affective Commitment Scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was adopted. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.85 for this scale.

**Job Satisfaction**

This was measured using the three-item job satisfaction scale used by Graves and Powell (1994). Coefficient alpha was 0.85 in this study.

**Control Variables**

Five control variables were included in this study, as they were found to affect the dependent variables in previous studies (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnyutsky, 2002; Sweeney and McFarlin, 1997; Wallace, 1995a). First, gender was a dummy variable coded 0 if the respondent was male and coded 1 if the respondent was female. Second, ethnicity was measured as a dummy variable coded 0 for non-Chinese and 1 for Chinese. Third, age of the respondents was categorised into four age groups: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and over 50. Fourth, organisational tenure was measured as the respondent’s total number of years working in the current organisation. Finally, job status
was indicated by a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent is a partner of the law firm and coded 0 if not.

**ANALYTICAL STRATEGY**

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four conditions must be fulfilled to evidence a mediating effect. First, the independent variable must predict the dependent variable. Second, the independent variable must affect the mediator. Third, the mediator must affect the dependent variable. Lastly, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable becomes less when the mediator is controlled.

We employed a series of hierarchical regression analyses to test for the mediating hypothesis, under the following procedures. In Step 1, we regressed each dependent variable (i.e., organisational commitment and job satisfaction) on the control variables and the independent variables (i.e., the four cultural types). In Step 2, the mediator, POS, was regressed on the control variables and the four cultural types. In Step 3, we regressed each dependent variable on cultural types and POS together. Mediating effect of POS is evidenced when the effects of the cultural types on the dependent variable become less, as shown by the change in regression coefficients. Full mediation exists when the regression coefficients become non-significant.

**RESULTS**

To establish the convergent and discriminant validity of the four cultural types, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.53. The results revealed that the four-factor model (i.e., VI, HI, VC, and HC are viewed as distinct constructs) provides a good fit to the data, with a $\chi^2$ value of 337.93 (d.f. = 98; $p < 0.01$). The root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.069, and the goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) were 0.92 and 0.93 respectively. All indicators loaded exactly on their respective constructs.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables are reported in Table 1. Among the several control variables, job status
Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

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<td>-0.17**</td>
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<td>0.41**</td>
<td>-0.14**</td>
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<td>0.53**</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
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<td>0.62**</td>
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Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

and organisational tenure had moderate correlations with the two dependent variables, especially partners tended to be more committed to the organisation (r = 0.36) and more satisfied with their job (r = 0.26), and organisational tenure was positively correlated with organisational commitment (r = 0.33) and job satisfaction (r = 0.22). Some significant correlations were also found among the four cultural types, POS, and
the outcome variables. VI and HI were positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.36$), so were VC and HC ($r = 0.42$). POS was negatively correlated with HI ($r = -0.09$), but positively correlated with VC and HC ($r = 0.19$ and 0.26 respectively). It should also be noted that POS was more strongly correlated with organisational commitment ($r = 0.67$) and job satisfaction ($r = 0.62$) than the four cultural types. Finally, organisational commitment has a strong and positive correlation with job satisfaction ($r = 0.70$).

Table 2 presents the regression results on POS and organisational commitment. Model 1 showed the effects of the control variables on organisational commitment. Among the five control variables, job status ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) and organisational tenure ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$) were found to have significant and positive effects. In Model 2, the four cultural types were entered with the control variables. It was found that HI had a negative effect ($\beta = -0.11$, $p < 0.05$) and HC had a positive effect ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$) on the dependent variable, which supported H1a. In Model 5, the control variables and the four cultural types were entered to predict POS, the mediator in this study. HI was found to have a negative effect ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < 0.05$) and HC was found to have a positive effect ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$) on POS. We then regressed organisational commitment on POS. As shown in Model 3, POS had a strong positive effect on organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, H2a was supported. Finally, all the independent variables and POS were entered in Model 4. As compared with Model 2, the effect of HI became insignificant ($\beta = -0.04$, ns), suggesting that POS fully mediated its effect on organisational commitment. Additionally, the effect of HC became weaker ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting the POS partially mediated its effect on this dependent variable. These findings provided support for H3a.
Table 2: Regression Analysis on Organisational Commitment and POS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Commitment</td>
<td>POS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Female = 1)</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Chinese = 1)</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Status (Partner = 1)</td>
<td>0.25***</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Tenure</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>-0.11*</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.10**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.61***</td>
<td>0.59***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>19.11***</td>
<td>15.47***</td>
<td>81.05***</td>
<td>50.32***</td>
<td>11.32***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.
N = 498
Standardised coefficients are reported.

In Table 3, similar analyses were conducted with job satisfaction as the dependent variable. As shown in Model 1, age group (β = 0.12, p < 0.05), job status (β = 0.18, p < 0.001), and organisational tenure (β = 0.09, p < 0.1) had significant and positive effects on job satisfaction. Model 2 included the four cultural types as the predictors. It was found that HC had a positive effect (β = 0.18, p < 0.001) and VC also had a marginal effect on the dependent variable (β = 0.08, p < 0.1). In view of these findings, H1b was supported. In Model 3, POS, the mediator was entered with the control variables. It exerted a strong positive effect on job satisfaction (β = 0.60, p < 0.001), which supported H2b. Lastly, in Model 4, all the independent variables and POS were included to predict job satisfaction. As compared with Model 2, both the effects of
VC ($\beta = 0.04$, ns) and HC ($\beta = 0.06$, ns) became statistically insignificant in this model. This implies that POS fully mediated their effects on job satisfaction, thus supporting H3b.

**Table 3: Regression Analyses on Job Satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Female = 1)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.10*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Chinese = 1)</td>
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<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Status (Partner = 1)</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Tenure</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.60***</td>
<td>0.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>10.18***</td>
<td>9.17***</td>
<td>58.75***</td>
<td>36.10***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $+ p < 0.1$; $^* p < 0.05$; $^{**} p < 0.01$; $^{***} p < 0.001$.

*N = 498

Standardised coefficients are reported.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of our study was to show how cultural values are related to work attitudes. We examined whether employees’ perceived organisational support (POS) acts as a mediator between cultural types and organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Our results offered some support for this mediating argument. Hypothesis 1a, stating that the horizontal dimension (collectivism and individualism) is positively related to organisational commitment, was partially supported in that horizontal collectivists (HC) were more committed to their organisation. However, we also found that horizontal individualists (HI) were less committed. The two vertical dimensions
(VI and VC) had no effect, therefore, organisational commitment seems to be unimportant to vertical individuals who expect inequalities between people. The essence of horizontalness is equality, although HC, who sees the self as part of a group, is more committed to the organisation than HI, who believes in an autonomous self. It makes sense that HC, who has a sense of oneness and cooperativeness with his or her fellow employees (Triandis, 1995), feels committed to the organisation.

Hypothesis 1b, that collectivism (both horizontal and vertical) is positively related to job satisfaction, was supported. We found that VC has a marginal positive effect and HC has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Individualism (i.e., VI and HI) did not have any significant effect. Therefore, among collectivists, paying attention to the V-H distinction provides a more fine-grained interpretation of job satisfaction. Collectivists who are intolerant of inequities among people (i.e., HC) experience more job satisfaction than those collectivists who accept inequities among people (i.e., VC). HC, who is less interested in the organisational hierarchy, may focus more on lower-order needs at work and feel more satisfied with the job.

As anticipated, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported in that POS has a strong positive effect on both organisational commitment and job satisfaction. These results are consistent with the prediction of social exchange theory, thus highlighting the significance of this theory in the Asian context.

Our finding for Hypothesis 3a was that POS fully mediates the relationship between HI and organisational commitment, and partially mediates the relationship between HC and organisational commitment. This finding provides support for hypothesis 3a. POS represents an employee’s evaluation of his or her status within the organisation (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, and Relyea, 2006). It also reflects an organisation’s genuine concern about the employee’s personal well-being (Eisenberger et al, 1986) and respect for the employee’s rights at work. As horizontals place a strong emphasis on equal rights and status (Soh and Leong, 2002), POS satisfies their needs (i.e., the need for respect and equal status) and thus it acts as a generative mechanism for developing organisational commitment.
We also hypothesised that POS mediates the relationship between collectivism (both horizontal and vertical) and job satisfaction. Our result for this hypothesis (i.e., H3b) was supported in that POS fully mediated the relationships between VC and job satisfaction and between HC and job satisfaction. In collectivistic cultures, individuals are provided with protection and security by their in-group in return for loyalty (Noordin, Williams, and Zimmer, 2002), thus with more support from the organisation they may be more satisfied with their jobs.

In summary, we can conclude that POS operates differently among collectivistic and individualistic employees regarding the impact on organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

Practical Implications

Our findings have several practical implications. It would be helpful to include some of the findings outlined above in cross-cultural training for people assigned to work outside their home country. We support Triandis’s (2004) conclusion that the horizontal and vertical varieties of the individualism and collectivism framework can be used as a general way of thinking about cultural differences and facilitate learning about other cultures.

We concur with Wang et al (2002) that organisations should try to create a horizontal-collectivist oriented organisational culture, focusing on commitment to the organisation. Since HCs are more likely to perceive the organisation as supportive, this is a good reason to nurture and reward a horizontal-collectivist orientation in the organisation. Lastly, our study provides the rationale for managers to be aware of, and nurture the cultural values of, their employees. An understanding of employees’ cultural values and POS may provide two options that managers can use to increase the commitment and job satisfaction of their workforce.
Theoretical Implications

We agree with Singelis et al (1995) that findings such as ours suggest that the distinction between horizontal and vertical I—C provides advantages such as new information, and is worth making. We found that the effects of these four cultural types on POS and job attitudes are different. The cultural type framework proves to be useful in understanding the relationship between national culture and employee work attitudes.

Furthermore, we answered Moideenkuty et al’s (2001: 632) call for more research that identifies antecedents of POS and the mediating role of POS in the relationship between these antecedents and employee attitudes. Our study supports and extends previous research findings that POS acts as a mediating variable. POS appears to be a variable with important implications for the development of organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Miodeenkuty et al, 2001).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While our study makes important contributions regarding the mediating role of POS, it also has a number of limitations. One limitation is that the data were cross-sectional, making causality difficult to determine. Second, all of the variables were assessed by self-report measures, raising the possibility of common methods bias. Third, our response rate of 12.5 per cent is lower than desired; however, our sample consists of busy lawyers who may be too pressed for time to complete a mailed survey. In fact, the response rate of mailed surveys conducted in Hong Kong is generally lower than that in other countries (Harzing, 2000). Finally, since our data were collected within a single country, the generalisability of our findings is restricted. Nevertheless, Hong Kong, a place where the East meets the West, provides an ideal research site to test our hypotheses.

Future research directions should include exploring some behavioural outcome variables such as job performance and voluntary turnover. It is also important to identify other possible mediators (and/or moderators) between cultural values and work attitudes.
Additionally, it would be useful for our study to be replicated using different samples and in different cultural contexts. The theoretical and practical relevance of our research findings need to be further explored from a cross-cultural perspective.

REFERENCES


