



## National culture, leadership and citizenship: Implications for cross-cultural management

Mark R. Testa\*

HTM Program, PSFA 443, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

National culture  
Leader–member exchange (LMX)  
Leadership behavior  
Organizational citizenship  
Cross-cultural management

### ABSTRACT

Continued globalization is raising the level of diversity within hospitality organizations as well as the likelihood that leaders will manage those from varying national cultures. Previous research has found that cultural congruence between leaders and stakeholders (i.e., from the same or different national cultures) impacts a variety of variables including perceived leadership style, satisfaction and trust. This study extends this line of research by investigating the relationship between cultural congruence, perceived leadership style, leader–member exchange (LMX) and employee citizenship behaviors. Using a highly diverse sample of 520 members of congruent and incongruent dyads from 66 countries working for 2 large cruise lines and 2 subsidiaries, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the relationships. It was determined that cultural similarity impacted employee perceptions of LMX relations and organization citizenship behaviors, but not leadership style. The results of the study provide strategies for cross-cultural management in the hospitality industry.

© 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Among challenges in the hospitality industry is the need to provide the best service quality possible with fewer and fewer resources. Increasingly, the primary method leaders have for improving service performance is developing a quality relationship with service employees. Given the increase in globalization and diversity over the past decade, it is likely that managers will supervise groups of employees which maintain very different cultural backgrounds, beliefs and attitudes than themselves (Maxwell et al., 2000). This may pose some difficulty for line managers seeking to build such relationships and improve employee performance and ultimately customer satisfaction. A key component in the relationship between leaders and subordinates is the perception subordinates maintain regarding their supervisor and their leadership style (Shaw, 1990). To what extent do differences in national culture in such a multi-cultural environment impact the relationship between leaders and subordinates, and subsequent subordinate outcomes?

Cross-cultural leadership has been largely investigated in management studies looking at national culture and managerial practices. Perhaps the most heavily cited work has been conducted by Hofstede (1991) who set out to determine if American management theories

applied abroad. Hofstede's seminal work has provided the foundation for many cross-cultural studies, most often seeking to determine how differences on cultural dimensions (i.e., power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity) impacted work related outcomes. From a leadership standpoint several empirical approaches have been taken such as evaluating the effects of leadership style on subordinates with different cultural characteristics (Jung and Avolio, 1999), comparing actual leadership behaviors to cultural characteristics (Offermann and Hellmann, 1997), and identifying leadership differences and preferences between work-groups from different nations (Kuchinke, 1999). In spite of these in-depth investigations, a dearth exists looking at the extent to which cultural differences exist between a leader and subordinate, and the subordinate's perception of, and response to their leader.

While much has been done on leadership at the dyadic level (i.e., leader–member exchange (LMX), see Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gerstner and Day, 1997; Borchgrevink and Boster, 1997 for reviews), and how differences between supervisors and subordinates might impact the relationship (Allinson et al., 2001), little has looked at how cultural congruence (leaders and subordinates originating from the same national culture) impacts subsequent employee outcomes. A notable exception is a study conducted by Pillai et al. (1999), which looked at the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX to organizational justice and job satisfaction in five different cultures. Using a varied sample of 755 MBA students and working professionals from the US, Australia, India, Columbia and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and Jordan), the researchers determined that

\* Tel.: +1 619 594 6642.

E-mail address: [mtesta@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:mtesta@mail.sdsu.edu).

differences existed between western and non-western cultures. The samples in the US and Australia reported that transformational leadership and LMX influenced organizational justice and job satisfaction where the relationship was more complicated for the non-western sample. The study suggests that work-related values based on national culture impacted the relationship between LMX and employee outcomes.

Another area in need of further study of cross-cultural leadership is the hospitality environment. While some work has been done, we know little about how the dynamics of the industry impact the relationship between leaders and stakeholders in the multi-cultural environment. Pizam et al. (1997) study provided some insight as to the impact of national culture versus the hotel industry's culture on managerial behavior. In addition, the researchers attempted to identify the impact of personal work values on managerial behavior. Using a sample of 192 hotel managers from Hong Kong, Japan and Korea, the researchers found significant differences between the three groups. The results indicated that national culture had a greater impact on 22 of 29 managerial practices than the hotel industry culture.

Testa (2002) conducted a study of cultural congruence and employee outcomes in the cruise industry. The study investigated the impact cultural congruence of leaders and subordinates (i.e., coming from the same or different culture) had on perceived leadership style, trust, commitment and satisfaction with supervisor. Using a sample of 367 members of congruent and incongruent leadership dyads from a large cruise organization, the researcher found that subordinates within congruent dyads reported higher levels of consideration behaviors, where subordinates within incongruent dyads reported higher levels of initiating structure behaviors on the part of their supervisor. Further, members of congruent dyads reported greater levels of trust and satisfaction with their supervisor than their incongruent counterparts.

More recently Testa (in press) administered open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews with service workers in a multi-cultural environment. The goal was to assess how perceptions of leadership behavior impacted the relationship between leader and follower as well as any subsequent behavioral outcomes. The results suggest that subordinates do not consciously differentiate between leaders who are similar or dissimilar from a cultural standpoint. Conversely, most agreed that differences can impact the relationship. Some suggest that comfort level and clearer expectations result when the supervisor comes from the same country due to common language and customs. Unexpectedly, it was determined that cultural similarity can actually cause negative consequences for some subordinates. For example, if a manager is concerned about "playing favorites," with a fellow countryman, he or she may actually manage more sternly and be less supportive. This is clearly a complex issue that requires further study.

To address the complexity of cultural relationships, the current study seeks to take a quantitative approach. While it seems clear that cultural congruence impacts subordinate perceptions of their leaders, little is known about the effect on the relationship between the two and subsequent employee behavioral outcomes. Does this varying perception of leadership style impact employee perceptions of their relationship with their supervisor (i.e., LMX) and their subsequent helping behavior in the service environment (i.e., organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs))?

## 2. Theoretical foundation

### 2.1. Cultural congruence and leadership evaluation

Why should similarities in national culture impact the relationship between leaders and subordinates? Several theoretical

frameworks provide support for this interesting relationship and provide direction for hypothesis development. First, "fit" between national cultural values and managerial practices is an area that supports this investigation (Newman and Nollen, 1996). National culture is important in the workplace because of the common beliefs, ideas and attitudes that develop among groups. When an individual with a strong ethnic culture enters the workplace, his or her past experiences impacts his or her perception of the environment (Hofstede, 1991). Newman and Nollen (1996) suggest that appraisals of the work environment counter to the deeply held beliefs developed by cultural background can result in negative outcomes. Conversely, a more positive appraisal of the work environment may result when managerial practices are consistent with cultural preferences. A significant component in the work environment is the employee's immediate supervisor and the subsequent assessment of the supervisor's leadership.

The process of identifying leaders from non-leaders is referred to as leadership categorization (Shaw, 1990). According to Shaw (1990), subordinates develop leadership schemas or prototypes which form the foundation of leadership evaluation. That is, employees create an image of what a leader is, and then compare this image to the actual leadership behaviors they witness. The result is a categorization of leader or non-leader status. Such status is important because both social power and influence should result when a positive appraisal occurs (Cronshaw and Lord, 1987), thereby impacting employee performance.

The categorization process is relevant to the multi-cultural work environment due to the assumptions an employee may make about their leader in relation to their leadership schema. When the supervisor's attributes are similar to those identified by the subordinate, "automatic" categorization is likely to occur (Shaw, 1990). The closer the leader is to the image developed by the subordinate, the more rapidly categorization occurs. When both the leader and subordinate originate from the same national culture, this automatic process is likely. Similarity in language, work values and beliefs should facilitate an automatic categorization process compared to a dyad where both members originate from different cultures. When little is known about the leader and the subordinate is unable to readily categorize his or her leader, a "controlled" process is possible. That is, subordinates will evaluate their leader over time until either leader or non-leader status is confirmed. It is conceivable that in a multi-cultural environment, cultural incongruence could facilitate the controlled process due to differences in language, work values and beliefs (Shaw, 1990). The result of such congruence or incongruence is likely to impact subordinate perceptions of his or her leaders' style as well.

## 3. Outcomes of cultural congruence

### 3.1. Leadership behavior

A foundation model used to identify leadership behaviors was developed by researchers at the Ohio State University (Fleishman, 1953; Hemphill and Coons, 1957). Both consideration and initiating structure behaviors have been well researched in past studies (Bass, 1990; Fisher and Edwards, 1988; Yukl, 2002). Consideration behaviors relate to those people-related dimensions, which illustrate a focus on follower needs and developing relationships. Such behaviors might include doing personal favors for employees, showing concern for employees, and listening to employee concerns. Alternatively, initiating structure behaviors relate to those, which focus on task completion and the organization of work. Such behaviors might include scheduling, setting clear expectations and criticizing work performance. The

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1010086>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1010086>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)