Cultural Differentiation and Job Performance: the Moderation Role of Feedback Seeking Behavior

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Abstract: *This study concentrates on an investigation on how the variables of feedback seeking behavior (FBS) and job performance in the cross-cultural work settings. The author predicts that the feedback seeking from the sources of supervisors, colleagues and organization will influence on the relationship between the cultural different characters of collectivism and individualism. The empirical study conducted in the multinational companies located in China supported the assumptions. This research is innovative in theory and methodology which enriches managerial literature by exploring more inclusive solution that benefit work outcomes in cultural diversity teams using effective moderator to interact with the typical, influential cultural practice characters representing the salient characters of diversity typologies of separation.*

Keywords: *culture separation job performance work feedback seeking moderation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity in work setting has become an increasing point of discussion and concern associated with job effectiveness (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). The researchers assert the discrepancy in findings regarding diversity-related outcomes (van Knippenberg & Schippers).

Some studies have indicated a number of benefits related to a heterogeneous workplace associated with positive organizational outcomes (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kearny et al., 2009). Nevertheless, there are also numerous researchers indicating that the phenomenon detrimentally associates with the negative effects of a demographically diverse workplace. Addition to these "analogous to a double edged sword" (Millikens & Martins, 1996), a meta-analyses review concludes that the team member diversity is far from exerting and a statistically significant effect on work performance (Joshi & Roh, 2007).

In order to respond to these challenges of the complexity, mixture manifestations of diversity findings in reviews of research, many researchers have promoted elaborating possible contingency factors to clarify the connection between within-unit diversity and the unit-level outcome (Van Knippenberg, et al., 2007; Kearney, et al.,2009).

Furthermore, factors moderating the relationship between work group diverse and work outcomes, eg, diversity beliefs (Meyer & Schermuly, 2012), national variety (Ayub & Jehn, 2014); organizational identities (Few & Joshi, 2013); shared objectives (van Knippenberg et al., 2011); diversity climates (Lauring & Selmer, 2011); psychological safety (Singh et al., 2013), and etc. have the potential to substantially contribute to the effective management of workforce diversity.

Derived from Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007), the team cultural diversity is roughly conceptualized in this paper as the distribution of differences among members in cultural attribute, resulting in a unique mixture, which affects an individual's behavior, attitude, assumption, and expectations. Cox (2001) underlines that diversity is reflective of the variation in social and cultural identities among people existing together in an employment setting. Moreover, according to Gorman (2000), diversity may be conceived of as the varied perspectives and approaches members of different identity groups bring to the workplace.

Hofstede (1980) defines national culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another‖. In management, culture is defined in terms of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes and behavioral tendencies that are used to develop cultural categories (Javidan, et al., 2006). Recognized as an important organizational variable, culture remains the construct that is difficult to catch, and the complex, and diverse elements. Bailey, et al., (1997) suggested that "culture affects individual desire for, behavior toward and perception of performance feedback". The author of this paper does not propose a main effect hypothesis between cultural differentiation and job performance in the present research, rather, the author aims at exploring the potential links between critical diversity approaches and diversity management interventions in organizations focusing on a pair of specific cultural context variables that the author believes are associated with cognition patterns and work outcomes. The chosen variables were taken from the well-known Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (House, et al., 2004).Using a theory-driven approach, the author identified two of well-known cultural variables: collectivism and individualism that would explain behaviors of individuals, groups and organizations across different countries (Bond, 1996; Earley & Erez, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995), as such would have clear links to the relationship between cultural differentiation and job performance.

The author has a close examination on how some factors of feedback seeking behavior variable moderate cultural separation and job performance in the cross-cultural work setting. The author predicts that the feedback seeking from the sources of supervisors, colleagues and organization is associated with the relationship between the culturally different characters of collectivism/ individualism and job performance. The author contributes to the management literature by investigating on how feedback seeking (FBS) behavior, a noticeable variable in organizational behavior research, specifically, the channels of feedback seeking, links to the relationship between the culturally practical separation characters of collectivism and individualism and job performance.

2. THEORETICAL CONCEPTION AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Cultural Differentiation, defined as a composition of differences incultural attribute among unit members. Built on social categorisation (Turner, 1987), cultural differentiation suggests unfavourable effects of team consequence since diverse team tends to divide itself into distinguished subgroups via the social categorisation processes generating relationship conflicts and impeding collaboration, which in turn increase turnover among team members. On the other hand, 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954) can benefit in enhancement of problem solving, decision making (cf. Homan, et al., 2007) and innovation and creativity in management. The author considers the value dimension of individualism and collectivism as cultural differentiation that are different in cultural category.

Collectivism is defined as - the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action. (Javidan et. al, 2006)".

Individualism corresponds to the primacy people place on themselves over their aggregate social group (Mary &Steven, 2000). The conceptualization of individualism-collectivism (IC) has been shown as two independent factors with two contrasting poles opposing points on a continuum (Earley& Stubblebine, 1989; Hofstede, 1980). Most conceptualizations and measures of IC reflect its multidimensional and multilevel construct (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Earley et al., 1999; Schwartz, 1990; Triandis, 1995).

FBS behavior refers to the initiative of individuals to seek valuable information about their job performance in order to better adapt to the organizational environment and individual development needs (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). FBS behavior is considered as important and valuable self-fulfillment and interpersonal insightfulness that are relative with emotional intelligence to employee performance and managerial practice (Goleman, 1998, Ashford, et. al, 2003). The employees who actively seek feedback not only have a high degree of identification with the organization, but can quickly integrate into the organization and show good performance at work (Ashford, et al, 2007).The performance of FBS behavior is affected by its own characteristics. More studies show that the higher the frequency of individual feedback seeking, the better the communication and the higher the job satisfaction and performance, and vice versa (Tepper et al., 2006). Feedback giving and feedback seeking are integral and reciprocal activities (London, 1997). Furthermore, feedback giving occurs across levels of analysis. Individuals engage in feedback-seeking source choices and they can seek the information

from any channel available. (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Callister et al., 1999). In this study, the author identifies three FBS sources: from the supervisor, colleagues and from organization. (e.g., unit reports, posted charts). Because feedback giving is affected by cultural characteristics in the cross cultural setting, the solicitation of feedback might be impacted as well.

To date, though the cultural diversity, feedback, and job performance have been heavily examined factors in the organizational behavior research respectively, the reviews show that researchers either examined the relationship between the culture and FBS behavior, for example, the theme of discussion is primarily that the strategies of FBS behavior are influenced by the individual's cultural (Mary & Steven, 2000) and how culture might affect organizational feedback giving, the recognized antecedent to an individual's feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Mary & Steven, 2000), or much of this literature is concerned with showing the effectiveness of feedback on influencing future individual behavior and performance (Cusella, 1987). This study focuses on how the relationship between the ways values are expressed as reflected in the characteristics of cultural practice and job performance is directly influenced by the interpersonal interaction and communication that occur in each culture. Correctly using FBS behavior can bridge the gap between the cultural diversity team and wok outcomes.

Since collectivist employees are loyal and obey their leader, they are favored by the leaders and maintain better relationship, However, identified such concepts as face saving (Earley & Erez, 1997; Triandis, 1990) collectivist individuals would defend their egos by engaging in the defensive strategies avoiding openly asking their supervisors, they tend to seek feedback from their leaders privately.

With information about themselves, the individuals in individualistic cultures, in which direct communication is valued, would be more likely to express clear, direct require for feedback (Aycan & Kanungo, 2001). Therefore, it should be natural for the employees that are considered high in individualist orientation. To directly ask for feedback with leaders to address their personal information needs.

Reviews have showed that the superiors pay more attention to those who have active FBS activities, but neglect those who lack FBS action. Openly seeking feedback upward would be useful to help the leader to know more about the member so that the leaders would pay close attention to the member and give the members the valid information which is conducive to the members' task fulfillment. Therefore, it is based on these assumptions that the author of this paper proposes the following hypotheses:

H1a. FBS from supervisor will be positively associated with performance for the individuals that are considered high in collectivist orientation.

H1b: FBS from supervisor will be positively associated individuals that are considered high in individualist orientation.

Image defense or preventing embarrassment is important for employees who are more in collectivist orientation (Kim & Nam, 1998; Triandis, 1990). Moreover, in high collectivist societies, direct criticism is avoided because team harmony is essential (Fletcher & Perry, 2001). The employees who are high in individualistic cultures tend to be more concerned with preserving their own ego, whereas people in collectivist value is more lenient with others' party. That is, in collectivist cultures, face giving (i.e., allowing room for the other person to maintain or recover his or her face) is important (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Face-saving and face-giving behaviors focus less on the accuracy of a statement and more on what is culturally appropriate for the context (Samovar, et al., 2006). Lenience biases are likely to limit the willingness of cultures with more of a collective identity people to provide direct negative feedback to others.

In an individualistic culture, employees would prefer finding out needed information for themselves directly upward as mentioned above rather than by inquiring from peers owing to their competitive relationship. Hence, the author proposes:

H2a. FBS from colleagues will be negative association with performance for the individuals that are

considered highly collectivist-oriented.

H2b: FBS from colleagues will be negative association with performance for the individuals that are considered highly individualism-oriented.

For employees who are in high collectivist societies attach great importance to the interests of the organization and abide by the organizational rules and norms. So the intention to know the individual record in the organization is normal, the emphasis will be on the betterment of the organization through improving accuracy and understanding the task (Trope, 1982). The collectivists exhibit more organization-monitoring FBS behavior than individualists (Hwang and Francesco, 2010). In collective culture, the feedback process is focused on the formal structure to create a method of self-enhancement, (Shackleton & Ali, 1990), and the organizational level feedback is the routine like the direct reports', statistical records about the workforce of the unit. And with evaluating the position the individual is in the achievement in the organization, the individual can perform better, enhance their advantage and avoid their shortcoming. This can increase work quality.

In individualism culture, the feedback process is less focused on formal structure (Shackleton & Ali, 1990) and there is an intrinsic belief in individual decisions (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), and, thus, individual goals become the primary focus of behavior (Triandis, 1990).

Hence the author postulates:

H3a: FBS from organization is positively related to the culture considered high in collectivist orientation.

H3b: FBS from organization source is less positively associated with performance in individualistic orientation.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from 427 participants from multinational corporations located in China including joint ventures, corporation sole. To achieve sufficient statistical power for the multilevel modeling, the current data for analysis were chosen from countries that had at least 10 participants following the criterion based on simulation studies (Kreft & DeLeeuw, 1998). These participants were from 8 countries having sample sizes that ranged from 10 to 81employees. Totally, 553participants including supervisors and subordinates respectively came from eight countries, and 427 questionnaires were collected, accounting for 76%response rate owing to well organized. Based on these 427 individuals, a preliminary analysis revealed that75.3% were male. The average age was 31.65, with the ages ranging from 22 to 58. To test the hypothesis, the author obtained the records of the employees' performance evaluations from each organizations.

Feedback Seeking Sources

The author used the questionnaire developed by Vande Walle et al. (2000) with questions as how frequently participants sought feedback from supervisors, colleagues and organization source regarding (a) overall job performance, (b) technical aspects of the job, (c) values and attitudes of the corporations, (d) role expectations, and (e) social behaviors using the 5-Liket scale anchored by 1 (almost never) and 5 (very frequently). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .92.

Cultural practices. The Globe data were taken (House et al. 2004 for individualism; Javidan, et al., 2006 for society collectivism). The scores of collectivism and individualism were used separately in this study though the two conception were usually considered as in opposite pole. Because the author thought that it could not divided the score of individualism and collectivism for an individual by half to half.

Table 1 lists the 8 countries included in this study and the scores for each of the countries collectivism and individualism as well as the means and standard deviations for FBS sources of supervisor, colleague organization.

Analytic Strategy

Using Mplus 4.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2006), multilevel modeling was run to test hypotheses (see, table 3) since each member in the sample was nested under the corresponding country culture from which he or she came, avoiding underestimate or overestimate standard errors for parameter estimates. (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Snijders & Bosker, 1999). To test the main effects of FBS sources on cultural variables, the author estimated an intercept-only regression model for FBS sources at Level 1 and predictive effects of cultural practice variables on the Level-1 random intercept were Level-1 random regression slopes of collectivism and individualism in predicting cultural value both by group means when they were entered into corresponding multilevel models to avoid interpretation difficulties and spurious findings according to Hofmann and Gavin's (1998) suggestion. In addition, to provide a realistic view of how these cultural practices operate in concert with each, the author included them together simultaneously as Level-2 predictors in the analysis.

4. RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among all variables across countries are presented in Table 1.

Table1. FBS Seeking from Three Sources and Cultural Practice Scores Included in the studies

Country	Feedback Seeking Sources						Collectivism	Individualism
	Colleagues		Supervisor		Organization			
	mean	*sd*	*mean*	*sd*	*mean*	*sd*	M	M
1. China	3.73	0.33	3.85	0.36	3.89	0.39	4.77	3.23
2. France	3.75	0.41	3.89	0.35	3.89	0.32	3.93	4.07
3. Italy	3.83	0.42	3.91	0.35	3.87	0.32	3.68	4.32
4. Japan	3.85	0.40	3.68	0.29	4.06	0.33	5.19	3.13
5. South Korea	3.70	0.36	3.67	0.42	4.02	0.36	4.40	2.80
6. Singapore	3.75	0.37	3.69	0.37	4.23	0.35	4.90	3.10
7. Sweden	3.93	0.39	3.80	0.35	4.10	0.38	4.10	2.78
8. USA	3.87	0.36	3.93	0.41	3.85	0.37	4.20	3.80

Table 2. Correlations, Reliability, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	Correlation					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Supervisor source	3.85	0.45	—					
2.Colleagues Source	3.81	0.41	.07	—				
3. Organization Source	3.83	0.37	.09*	.6	—			
4. Collectivism	3.72	0.36	.017**	.05	.32**	—		
5. Individualism	3.61	4.45	.28**	.07	. ₀₀ .	.08	.03	—.
6.. Job Performance	5.61	1.16	.36*	.05	.31**	.04	.02	—

Note: N = 427 for the correlations between individual-level variables (Variables 1-3) and country-level variables (Variables 4–5).   To calculate them, the author assigned the same country-level scores to all individuals who were from the same country. The correlations between two country-level variables were calculated at the country level with a sample size of N=8   *p < .05. **p < .01.

Testing Cross-Level Effects of Moderation Effects of Feedback seeking sources Variables

To test the cross-level moderation hypotheses, the author estimated two multilevel models that examined how FBS sources from supervisors, colleagues and organization predict the relationships between cultural context variables and job performance. Specifically, the author entered collectivism and individualism value respectively, as the Level-1 predictor of job performance in two models. The author then entered three feedback sources variables as the Level-2 predictors in predicting the

random intercept (0) and random slope (1) from the Level-1 regression. The coefficients of feedback sources variables (i.e., γ11, γ12 and γ13) provided the test of our hypotheses. As indicated in Table 3, collectivism was significantly related to the job performance slope, γ11 = 0.082, z = 2.76, p< .01.

Table 3. Multilevel Models for Testing Cross-Level Moderation Effects of FBS Sources

| | Level-1 prediction | | | |
| | Collectivism → JP | | Individualism → JP | |
Model	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
	Random intercept model without Level-2 predictors			
Level 1—variance (σ^2_{within})	0.106**	0.006	0.106**	0.006
Level 2				
random intercept (β0)				
Intercept (γ00)	3.675**	0.226	3.67** 5	0.226
Variance (τ0)	0.018**	0.005	0.018**	0.005
Random slope (β0)				
Intercept (γ10)	0.079 *	0.035	0.096*	0.051
Variance (τ1)	0.009*	0.005	0.010**	0.004
	Random intercept and slope model with Level-2 predictors			
Level 1—variance (within2)	0.106**	0.006	0.106**	0.006
Level 2				
Random intercept (β0)				
Intercept (γ00)	3.648**	0.232	3.650**	0.232
Supervisor source (γ01)	0.106*	0.057	-0.057	0.057
Peers source(γ02)	-0.057	0.048	0.106*	0.048
Organization source (γ03)	0.018	0.032	0.018	0.032
Residual variance (σ^2_{e0})	0.012**	0.005	0.012**	0.005
Random slope (β1)				
Intercept (γ10)	0.679	1.465	1.301	0.924
Supervisor source (γ11)	0.082**	0.032	0.185 *	0.087
Colleagues source (γ12)	0.047	0.186	0.005	0.086
Organization (γ13)	0.117**	0.057	0.126**	0.058
Residual variance (σ^2_{e0})	0.005	0.017	0.003	0.005
Variance in random intercept accounted for by Level-2 predictors (%)	65.0		68.8	

Note. Level-1 N=427 ; Level-2 N=8   *p < .05. **p < .01.
Predictors at Level 1 were centered by group means.

The author plotted the significant interaction at conditional variable of feedback source of supervisor (i.e. ±SD) following Cohen, et al., (2003) procedure. As shown in Figure.1, Feedback seeking source from supervisor was positively associated with the relationship between collectivism and performance, supporting H1a. A similar finding was obtained that feedback seeking from organizational source– job was positively and significantly related to the collectivism – job performance slope, γ13=0.117, z= 2.16, p< .05, performance slope, γ13=0.117, z= 2.16, p< .05, colleagues did not show positive effects in predicting collectivism –job performance slope, providing support for H2a.
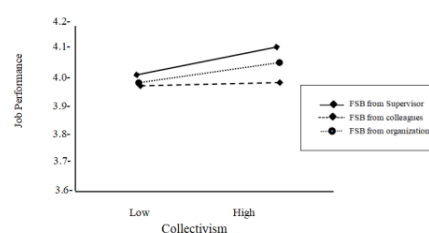

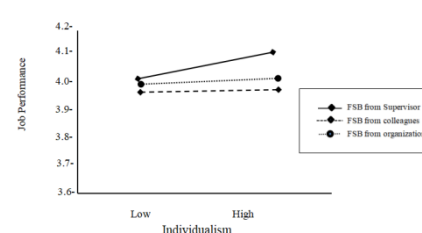*Figure 2.1.1.* Influence of feedback seeking sources on collectivism- job performance   *Figure 2.1.2.* Influence of feedback seeking sources on individualism- job performance

As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between individualism value and job performance is stronger

when feedback seeking from supervisor, supporting H1b. The author also found that feedback seeking from either colleagues or organization was negatively related to the relationship between the individualism value and job performance supporting H2b and H3b.

Then, comparing the residual variances of the current models with nested models that did not contain the cross-level interaction term of feedback seeking sources variables (i.e., the random intercept and slope model without Level-2 predictors in Table 3), the author found that as a set of predictors, feedback seeking sources explained 67.0% of the variance in the random collectivism–job performance slope and 58.8% of the variance in the random individualism–job performance slope. Overall, these findings suggest that feedback sources are related to the relationships between cultural variables and job performance.

5. CONCLUSION

The author used a theory-driven approach to assess the way in which feedback seeking sources variables might affect the relationship between cultural context variables and job performance. The finding that the relationship between collectivism and job performance was higher for the members who frequently seek feedback from their supervisors and organizations. It is noticeable that the relationships between source from supervisor and job performance were decreased in countries characterized by high collectivism after organization source variable is controlled for. This makes sense because collectivism cultures are characterized by people abide by organizational norms, prioritizing organizational goals over individual goals. On the other hand, the results of that also show that members who have individualist value directly expressing their true thoughts and feelings regardless of their status or power relationships. In such cultures, members are more likely to know how their leaders evaluate their work, their strengths and weaknesses, and make clear the goals of their future efforts. Consistent with the hypotheses, the author found a main effect for colleagues feedback source had not been found on both individualism and collectivism suggesting a leniency bias in collectivism cultures and competition in individualist cultures.

Implications: Researchers have been trying to find ways to address the negative effects of cultural differences on job performance and turn them into positive factors using intervention methods such as moderating variables. This study helps us to have a deeper understanding of the potential links between critical cultural diversity approaches and diversity management interventions in organizations associated with cognition patterns and work outcomes.

It seems that the relationship between a cultural diverse workforce and its job performance is much more complicated. This is primarily due to whether cultural differentiations mean ”conflict” or "contact" depending on of factors and processes moderating the link between diversity and its potential benefit and costs (Qin et al., 2012). That the extent to which workforce heterogeneity will have a beneficial or detrimental effect on group performance depends on how the heterogeneous groups are managed within an organization (Kochan et al.2003). Cultural differentiation in diverse work force can be managed well for an organization associated with many benefits if a number of factors like feedback seeking sources variables are taken into consideration and addressed in an effective way. Feedback seeking behavior is considered as an important element for workforce individual to improve their job performance. However, among factors of feedback seeking factors (eg. Srrateg), the FSB sources are the critical elements needed to be addressed. Since asking leaders' opinions about oneself's performance can gain more useful feedback and correspondingly receive guidance even supporting which is benefit for job performance. As shown in this research, individuals in workforce cultural heterogeneity seek feedback due to the different cognitive backgrounds, mental-models, experiences, and perspectives brought by team members from different cultural backgrounds (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kearny et al., 2009).

Tough FBS from supervisor will be positively associated with performance for both the collectivists and individualists. The individualists seem to be easier to access to the information from leaders that is advantage to job performance due to their bold, directly requiring. While the collectivists who actively seek feedback from the organization will benefit in improving job performance effectively. Comparing the leader source and organization source, seeking feedback from colleagues only is the supplement only.

The author contributes to the managerial literature on investigating on how feedback seeking behavior

(FBS) which is noticeable variable in cultural diversity organizational behavior research, specifically, the channels of feedback seeking, links to the relationship between the cultural characters of collectivism and individualism and job performance.

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