Understanding the Effect of Individualism vs. Collectivism on Ethical Decision Making

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Abstract

This project will investigate cross cultural differences in the ethical decision-making process of people at work. The project will involve research collaborators across the globe to gather unique data from several nations and cultures. This multinational research project will examine *how* culture impacts the ethical decision-making process. Specifically, this study proposes that perceptions of ethical misconduct will mediate the relationship between dark personality characteristics (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) and ethical misconduct, and that culture will moderate these relationships. This research will recruit participants from three different countries: The United States, Chile, and India. This groundbreaking international initiative will allow the researchers to better understand the interaction of individual personality and culture on perceptions of ethical misconduct and counterproductive work behaviors.

Summary

Background

According to the Ethics Resource Center in 2011, 82% of organizations had documented ethical standards for their organization. Companies put ethical guidelines and training programs in place in an attempt to decrease worker misconduct. However, ethics training programs have not resulted in a large decrease in employees' on-the-job unethical behavior (Ethics Resource Center, 2012).

Some research has demonstrated that less-desirable (or dark) personality characteristics, such as narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, predict how people perceive ethical transgressions (Jackson & Knight, 2015). Narcissists are characterized as having elevated and grandiose self-views (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Individuals with elevated levels of psychopathy are characterized as being impulsive and tend to lack guilt or remorse (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel, 2012). Last, Machiavellians tend to value expediency over principles, are manipulative, and have negative views of other people (O'Boyle et al., 2012). This project will examine these characteristics as they appear in normal (non-clinical) populations, because these traits can (and do) appear in the population without developing into psychological disorders.

Another possible reason for the lack of a sizeable decrease in ethical misconduct may be the fact that different people view ethics differently based upon their cultural upbringing. One of the commonly used ways of examining culture is using Hofstede's (2013) cultural typology. Using this framework, researchers have found that culture does have an impact on ethical behavior (Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl & Baumhart, 2003). However, what remains to be examined are the mechanisms and conditions under which culture impacts ethical behavior. Accordingly, it is imperative to examine the role of culture *and* personality as factors influencing perceptions of ethics and participation in CWBs. Therefore, the hypotheses follow as:

H1: The dark triad is positively related to one's perceptions of ethical misconduct

H2: Perceptions of ethical misconduct are positively related to CWBs

H3: Employee with traits that resemble the dark triad are more likely to commit CWBs

H4: Perceptions of ethical misconduct mediate the relationship between the dark triad and CWBs

H5: There will be a moderated mediation, such that culture moderates the relationship between the dark triad and perceptions of ethical misconduct as well as the relationship between perceptions of ethical misconduct and CWBs.

Participants

Participants will be recruited from United States, India, and Chile. Approximately 100 individuals will be recruited from each country. Additionally, an International Research Collaboration small grant was submitted to SIOP to help fund this project.

Materials and Procedure

Participants will complete an online survey on Qualtrics. Ethical misconduct will be measured using the Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct scale (Jackson & Knight, 2015). CWBs will be measured using Bennett and Robinson's Interpersonal and Organizational Deviance Scale (Sackett, Berry, Wiemann & Laczo, 2006). Individualism and collectivism differences will be measured using Hofstede's (2013) Values Survey Module. Lastly, the dark triad will be measured using the Jonason and Webster's Dirty Dozen scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010). This survey will be translated into the language of each country from which participants are recruited. To test the results, a moderated mediation analysis will be conducted (Hayes, 2013).

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