Perceived Managerial and Leadership Effectiveness in Mexico and the USA

A comparative study of effective and ineffective managerial behaviour

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of Mexican and US employees about effective and ineffective managerial behaviour.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative multiple cross-case comparative analysis of findings obtained from two past emic replication studies of observed effective and ineffective managerial behaviour carried out in Mexico and the USA respectively was conducted.

Findings

Notwithstanding the significant cultural variances between Mexico and the US underlined by various cross-cultural studies, our findings suggest that Mexican and US employees perceive effective and ineffective managerial behaviour in a very similar manner.

Research limitations

While the results of our study suggest that culture may not play a significant role in the way people perceive managerial and leadership effectiveness, we suggest that more replication studies with larger and more balanced gender samples using different methods need to be performed in both countries.

Practical implications

The findings of our study may be relevant for HRD professionals in both countries when providing training to expatriates for international assignments. Reinforcing the set of managerial practices that are perceived as effective in these two countries, and emphasizing those practices that may be particular to Mexico and the US respectively, could lead to an improvement in the performance of Mexican executives managing in the US and US executives managing in Mexico.

Keywords: managerial behavior, leadership behavior, perceived behavioural effectiveness, culture, Mexico, USA

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Introduction

The economic relationship between Mexico and the United States (US) is remarkably important. Mexico is the third largest commercial partner of the US just after Canada and China, with a total trade estimated at 579.7 billion dollars in 2016. The strong economic ties between Mexico and the US has made the relationship between these countries the subject of study by different policymakers (Villarreal, 2017). The economic ties between Mexico and the US are also expressed in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Since the implementation of NAFTA, FDI has been key in this economic relationship; the US is the largest source of FDI in Mexico (Villarreal, 2017). As a consequence, there are significant numbers of US companies with operations in Mexico as well as Mexican companies with establishments in the US. Given the high levels of FDI between Mexico and the US, it is not uncommon that US managers find themselves managing and leading people in Mexico and vice versa. This situation has led to the need to better understand the similarities and differences in regards to managerial and leadership practices in these countries.

Research suggests that the competiveness of the organization is positively or negatively affected by the effectiveness of its managers. Effective managers have the ability to positively influence the performance of their subordinates and therefore the performance of the company (Addis, 2003). Moreover, Ireland and Hitt (2005) suggested that effective leadership can help organizations to face the challenges associated with globalization. This perspective is supported by Rausch (1999) who stated that "no matter what the organization's activity, or country, the better the decisions of its managers and leaders, the more likely that the organization will thrive" (1). Effective management has also been associated with job satisfaction and productivity (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1993; Burns, 1978).

Despite the relevance that managerial effectiveness can have on the performance of an organization, contemporary research on the topic of managerial and/or leadership behavioural effectiveness is limited in both Mexico and the US. In

addition, we have not found any contemporary studies that compare managerial behaviours exhibited by managers in the two countries. Our present research addresses this gap in the literature by building upon two managerial behaviour studies of *perceived managerial and leadership effectiveness* conducted by us in Mexico and the US (Authors' names removed, 2013; Authors' names removed, 2017). In our study we compare the findings about the perceptions of Mexican and US employees regarding what behaviourally distinguishes/differentiates effective managers from ineffective managers.

The two past studies in Mexico and the US from which we have obtained the empirical source data used for our present cross-case/cross-nation comparative study, had replicated equivalent replication studies conducted by Hamlin and co-researchers in the UK (see Hamlin and Cooper, 2007; Hamlin and Bassi, 2008; Hamlin and Serventi, 2008). In alignment with these aforementioned studies, we mean by 'managerial and leadership effectiveness' "the behavioural effectiveness of managers in performing their everyday tasks of managing and leading people" (Authors' names removed, 2013, p. 131). And by 'leadership' we refer to the leadership that is performed by managers (at different levels in the organization) on a daily basis which also is known as 'general leadership' (House *et al.,* 2004) or 'supervisory leadership' (House and Aditya, 1997).

We consider that comparing the perceptions of Mexican and US employees about effective managerial and leadership behaviours is relevant given the increasing commercial relationships of these countries. We suggest it is important to know the similarities and differences in perceptions of what is considered effective/ineffective management by the Mexican and US workforce. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggest that performance of the organization is positively affected when managers are able to develop quality relationships with their subordinates. Therefore, alignment between the perceptions of managers and their subordinates about what is considered to be effective and ineffective management and managerial behaviour would have a positive impact on organizational performance (Testa, 2001).

Literature Review

Research on management and leadership in Mexico

Studies on managerial behaviour and behavioural effectiveness in Mexico are very limited. Nevertheless, there is research on the Mexican culture that suggests that certain managerial behaviours may be successful when managing the Mexican workforce.

Hofstede's (1980) cross-cultural study which included Mexico suggests that certain managerial behaviours may be effective in Mexico while others may be ineffective. For example, Hofstede's finding in Mexico about power distance indicates that Mexicans are high on this cultural dimension. This finding suggests that Mexican employees may feel comfortable with authoritarian managers and that they follow orders without questioning them. It could also suggest that managers should be directive and that employees do not necessarily need to be involved in decision making. In fact, some researchers have classified the Mexican management style as autocratic (Dorfman and Howell, 1997; Stephens and Greer, 1995).

Hofstede's findings also indicate that Mexicans are collectivist, which means that there is an inclination to belong to groups and that individuals look after each other in exchange for loyalty (Luthans and Doh, 2012). This finding suggests that effective managers in Mexico should take care of their workers in exchange for loyalty. However, different from Hofstede's findings, Trompennars and Hamden-Turner (1998) found Mexicans individualistic, which suggests that they may prefer to work individually rather than in groups.

In regards to the cultural dimension of masculinity/femininity, Hofstede found Mexicans highly masculine. Societies that are high on masculinity seem to give significant importance to advancement, recognition, and earnings (Luthans and Doh, 2012). This finding suggests that effective managers should provide reward and recognition to their employees. Hofstede also found Mexicans high on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance suggesting that employees in Mexico have a high need for security and they may be risk-averse and therefore they may prefer clear rules over ambiguity.

In exploring Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Mexico, Najera (2008), found that being respected by the managers, 'receiving appreciation and recognition,' 'creating a congenial working environment,' and 'showing flexibility' are perceived as important

aspects of work by the Mexican workforce. Additionally, Davis and Nayebpour (2004) found that employees in Mexico value training, work, and education more than leisure activities. The authors argued that managers should take into consideration these values in order to properly motivate employees.

The GLOBE cross cultural study (Global Leadership Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness, House *et al.*, 2004) also provides insight into the skills related to effective leadership behaviour in Mexico. The findings of the study suggest that effective general managers in Mexico exhibit behaviours such as being 'achievement oriented,' 'team players,' 'decisive,' 'competent,' and 'inspiring.' On the contrary, behaviours such as being 'malevolent,' 'self-centred,' a 'face saver,' 'autocratic,' and 'non-participative' should be avoided in Mexico because they are associated with ineffective strategic leadership (see also Ogliastri *et al.*, 1999).

Although, the aforementioned studies suggest that certain managerial behaviours may be effective in managing Mexican employees, these studies do not specifically explore what are the managerial behaviours that differentiate effective managers from ineffective ones. We only found one study that explicitly explores this topic in the literature (Authors' names removed, 2013). The authors explored the perceptions of managers and non-managerial employees about effective and ineffective managerial behaviour as manifested and observed within organizations in the private and public sectors in the Southeast East of Mexico. Their findings suggest that effective managers in the Merida region of Mexico: (i) care about customer service; (ii) make recommendations for work improvement, and demonstrate they are good at solving problems; (iii) actively support their employees; (iv) show care and concern for their employees by being sensitive to and understanding of their personal and family needs; (v) actively encourage employees to develop themselves; (vi) involve employees by taking into account their ideas and suggestions when making decisions; and (vii) communicate and consult well by actively listening to their employees. Our present cross-case/cross-nation comparative study builds in part upon the findings of this Mexican study.

Research on management and leadership in the United States

In contrast with Mexico, there are several studies on the topic of managerial and leadership effectiveness in the US. A significant amount of research on the topic of leadership effectiveness focuses on identifying those leadership behaviours that have a positive impact on employees' performance and thus in the organization (Yukl, 2012). Nevertheless, as pointed out by Yukl (2012), it has been challenging for scholars to compare these studies due to inconsistencies in the definition of terms or even in the definition of leadership. Furthermore, different scholars agree on the lack of consensus about leadership theory (e.g., Bass, 1985; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl *et al.*, 2002). In this section we present a leadership taxonomy developed by Yukl (2012) which integrates 50 years of research on effective leadership behaviour, almost all of which was conducted in the USA. In addition, as we did in the case of Mexico, we will address the implication of Hofstede' study (1980) as well as the implication of the GLOBE study on managerial and leadership effectiveness in the US.

Yukl's (2012) leadership taxonomy groups effective leadership behaviours into four meta-categories: task-oriented behaviour, relations-oriented behaviour, change-oriented behaviour, and external behaviour. The task-oriented behaviour category refers to the ability of the leader to use resources and people in an efficient manner. Problem solving, planning, monitoring, and clarifying responsibilities and objectives are examples of behaviours in this category. These behaviours have been found to have a positive correlation with managerial effectiveness (e.g., Kim and Yukl, 1995; Shipper, 1991; Komaki 1986). The relation-oriented behaviour category encompasses behaviours that promote a strong commitment to the mission and the organization. It is also related to the capacity of the leader to create an organizational environment of trust and cooperation. Supporting, developing, recognizing, and empowering are examples of the relation-oriented behaviours (Yukl, 2012). These behaviours have been found to have a positive correlation with leadership effectiveness (Dorfman *et al.*, 1992; Kim and Yukl, 1995; Shipper, 1991).

Advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation, and facilitating collective learning are example of change-oriented behaviours (Yukl, 2012). These leadership behaviours foster adaptation to change and innovation. Research shows that these behaviours support effective leadership (e.g. Beer, 1988; Kim and Yukl, 1995;

Edmonson, 1999). Finally, the fourth meta category of Yukl's (2012) taxonomy, external behaviour, consists of those leadership behaviours associated with obtaining resources and promoting the organization. Examples of external behaviours include: networking, external monitoring, and representing. These behaviours have been found to have a positive correlation with leadership effectiveness (Kim and Yukl, 1995; Dollnger, 1984; Dorfman *et al.,* 1992).

Hofstede's (1980) findings on the US also provide insight into what managers may need to manifest in order to be considered effective within the US culture. According to Hofstede's cross-cultural study, individuals are low on power distance in the US. This finding suggests that employees in the US do not blindly follow orders. Also, this finding suggests that people in the US are not very receptive to authoritarian managers. Participative managers who involve employees in decision making are considered to be more effective than authoritarian ones in countries like the US with a low score in power distance. Hofstede's findings on uncertainty avoidance indicate that individuals in the US are low on this cultural dimension suggesting that employees in this country are willing to take risks, and that they need more risk-taking managers. Managers in US organizations should encourage personnel to take their own initiative (Luthans and Doh, 2014).

Hofstede's findings on the cultural dimensions of individualism and masculinity show that individuals in the US are highly individualistic and highly masculine. A high score on individualism suggests that employees in the US prefer to take individual responsibility rather that collective responsibility. Additionally, US employees expect to be promoted based on achievement rather than seniority. Managers looking to succeed in the US should take these expectations into consideration. In regards to masculinity, the findings of Hofstede suggest that individuals in the US value success, physical assets, and money. These findings seem to indicate that managers looking to motivate employees in the US should provide physical rewards, money, advancement, and recognition.

As in the case of Mexico, the GLOBE study (House *et al.,* 2004) also provides insight into managerial practices that could be effective in the US. For example, the study suggests that behaviours such as charisma, participative leadership, and team

orientation could help general managers to succeed in the US; but they should avoid autonomous (independent, individualistic, and self-centric) and self-protective behaviours (conflict inducer, face saver, self-centered, status-conscious) because such behaviour could potentially inhibit effective leadership (Center for Creative Leadership, 2013).

In reviewing the literature, only one contemporary manager or leader behaviour study that specifically addresses the issue of perceived managerial and leadership behavioural effectiveness in the US was found (Authors' names removed, 2017). This study explored what US employees perceive as the specific managerial behaviours that differentiate effective managers from ineffective managers. The findings suggest that in the region of Atlanta in the US, managers are perceived as effective when they show behaviours indicating they are: caring, understanding, supportive, team players, democratic, good problem solvers, organized, fair-minded, and communicative. Our present cross-case/cross-nation comparative study builds also in part upon the findings of this study.

Theoretical framework

Our present study is guided by the *multiple constituency model of organizational (and managerial) effectiveness* and the concept of managerial *reputational effectiveness* which also theoretically guided the two source studies from which we have obtained our empirical data. According to the *multiple constituency model*, managers interact with a variety of stakeholders (superiors, subordinates, and peers) in the organizations where they perform. These different stakeholders have their own expectations and perceptions about the manager's performance (Tsui, 1990). The *reputational effectiveness* of the manager is defined by his/her performance as perceived by his/her superiors, peers, and subordinates. These perceptions about the manager's performance may affect positively or negatively the performance of the manager (Tsui and Ashford, 1994). For example, a positive perception of the performance of the manager by his/her subordinates could make the subordinates more willing to collaborate with the manager. On the other hand, a negative subordinate's perception of the performance of the manager could lead to the subordinates not wanting to work with the manager.

Purpose of the study and research questions

The aim of this study was to compare the perceptions of Mexican and US employees about *effective* and *ineffective* managerial behaviour. To this end, we conducted a qualitative multiple cross-case comparative analysis of findings obtained from the two aforementioned Mexican (Authors' names removed, 2013) and US (Authors' names removed, 2017) past emic replication studies. In our present study, we addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the perceptions of Mexican and US employees about effective managerial behaviour they observe?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the perceptions of Mexican and US employees about ineffective managerial behaviour they observe?

Methodology

As for the previous cross-nation comparative studies conducted by us (see Authors' names removed, 2018), we used the notion of *empirical generalization* replication research (Tsang and Kwan, 1999) and Berry's (1989) *derived etic* approach based on *replication logic* and *multiple cross-case comparative analysis* (Eisenhardt, 1989). Using a combined emic-etic approach is found suitable in order to reach valid derived generalizations (Berry, 1989). This approach consists of using similar methods to explore the same phenomena in different contexts, and then conducting a comparative analysis of the respective findings to identify similarities and differences across the cases.

Empirical Source Data

As previously mentioned, the empirical data used for this study were obtained from the abovementioned Mexican and US studies within a variety of public and private companies in Mexico and the US. We had access to all the raw data from these two source studies that were replications of an original study carried out by Hamlin (1988) on observed effective and ineffective managerial behaviour in United Kingdom (UK) state secondary schools. Consistent with Hamlin's (1988) original study and subsequent replication studies in which Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique (CIT) had been used for gathering the empirical data, participants in both countries (Mexico and US) received instruction about the purpose of the research, the expectations, and

specifically how the CIT interviewing would be conducted. In addition, they were provided with specific clarification on the various terms and concepts that would be used during the CIT interviews. For example*, managerial and leadership effectiveness* related to the "behavioural effectiveness of managers in performing their everyday tasks of managing and leading people" (Authors' names removed, 2013, p. 131) as observed and judged by their superiors, peers and subordinates. It did not relate to a manager's effectiveness in achieving the output performance requirements of his or her managerial role as measured against objective standards. *Effective Performance* was defined as behaviour which you would wish all subject managers to adopt if and when faced with similar circumstances (as originally adopted by Latham and Wexley, 1981). *Ineffective Performance* was defined as behaviour which, if it occurred repeatedly or even once in certain circumstances, might cause you to begin to question or doubt the managerial ability of that particular manager in that instance (as also adopted by Latham and Wexley, 1981).

The participants were asked to describe five concrete examples (critical incidents- CIs) of effective managerial behaviour and five CIs of ineffective managerial behaviour that they had observed within the past year. These behaviours could have been exhibited by any manager in the organizational hierarchy (above, below, or at the same level of the participant). If the participant was a manager, he/she was instructed not to provide personal incidents about their own managerial practice. The participants were asked three specific questions: i) What was the background situation, circumstance or context that led up to the managerial practice you have in mind? ii) What exactly did the subject manager do or not do that was either effective or ineffective? iii) How was the managerial practice that you have described an example of 'effective' or 'ineffective' management performance?

The subject focus and details of the two studies are provided in Table 1. Using CIT, critical incidents (CIs) of effective and ineffective managerial behaviour were obtained from purposive samples of managers and non-managerial employees. The collected CIs were subjected to *open* and *axial* coding (Flick, 2002) to group (categorise) them into behavioural clusters (categories) based on their similarity in meaning. Behavioural statements (BSs) were then formulated to describe and label the

overarching meaning held in common with all the CIs (*n=3 to 12*) constituting each of the derived behavioural categories. As can be seen in Table 1, the number of CIT informants surveyed was 35 and 81 for Mexico and the US respectively. Out of the 35 Mexican participants, 10 were non-managerial employees and 25 were managers. In regards to the US participants, out of the 81 participants, 62 were non-managerial employees and 19 were managers.

The number of CIs collected was 318 and 392 for Mexico and the US respectively; and the number of discrete BSs derived from the analyzed CIs was 33 for Mexico and 23 for the US.

Table 1. Empirical Source Data Used For the Present Derived Etic Study

	Subject focus of the study*	No. of CIT informants	Male	Female	No. of CIs Collected	No. Positive CCIs	No. Negative CCIs	No. of effective BSs	No. of ineffective BSs	Total number of BSs
Mexico	N, FL, M, S	35	12	23	318	154	164	15	18	33
US	N, FL, M, S	81	31	50	392	190	191	10	13	23
Totals		114	43	73	710	344	355	25	31	56

* Subject Focus: S-Senior manager. M-Middle managers. FL-First line managers. N-Non managers

Data analysis

In order to answer the research questions we conducted a deductive and inductive comparative analysis of the respective BS data sets obtained from the Mexican and US studies. This was done at the semantic level of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) using *open coding* to identify the salient unit (s) of meaning/concept (s) of each BS and to untangle those BSs containing more than one salient concept. At the *axial coding* level we looked for similarity, sameness, and congruence of meaning across the coded BSs (Flick, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994). *Sameness* was identified when the sentences or phrases of two or more BSs were close enough to be considered identical or near identical. *Similarity* was found when the sentences or phrases were not close enough; however, the meaning of the BSs was the same. And lastly, *Congruence* was identified

when an element of sameness or similarity was present in the key words used to describe the BSs.

Ensuring internal validity, reliability and consistency

The two sets of empirical data used for this study were highly comparable. As previously mentioned, both the Mexican and the US studies from which the data had been obtained had replicated a previous UK-based study conducted by Author 2, and had followed as closely as possible the same research design and protocols. Therefore, both studies were consistent in their research process. In addition, the 'functional equivalence' (Lyons and Chryssochoou, 2003) of the compared BS data sets was due to the fact that the purpose of the two source studies was the same, which was to identify critical incidents of effective/ineffective managerial behaviours observed by the research participants.

The reliability of our present study was ensured by the process of 'investigator triangulation' (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe 1991). The comparative analysis of the behavioral categories (BSs) was conducted by both authors independently of each other. This was followed by a code cross-checking (Gibbs 2007) step in order to mutually confirm the convergence/divergence of the behavioral categories. Whenever we had discrepancies, we discussed these until they were resolved.

Results

The detailed comparison of the two lists of behavioural statements (BSs) that label the behavioural categories that had resulted from the 'Mexican' and 'US' empirical source studies revealed a significant number to be nearly identical or similar in substance and meaning, as indicated in Table 2. As can be seen from the juxtaposed BSs, 10 out of the 15 'Mexican' positive *(effective)* behavioural categories are convergent in meaning with 6 of the 10 'US' behavioural categories. Similarly, 11 of the 18 'Mexican' and 11 of the 13 'US' negative *(ineffective)* behavioural categories are convergent in meaning. However, as can also be seen, the Mexican and US employees identified 5 and 4 perspective-specific positive *(effective)* categories of managerial behaviour, and 7 and 2 perspective-specific negative *(ineffective)* categories of managerial behaviour, respectively.

Table 2 Comparison of the "Mexican" and "US" positive (*effective*) and negative (*ineffective*) behavioural categories

Mexico Behavioural Categories Positive Behavioural Statements(BSs)	US Behavioural Categories Positive Behavioural Statements(BSs)
Convergent	**Convergent**
1. Provides rewards and recognizes employees in front of others	1. Recognizing and rewarding staff for good performance
2. Understands employees' personal and family needs 3. Makes sure employees have good working conditions 4. Distributes workload without overloading employees 5. Listens to the employees' needs 6. Addresses employees' concerns and questions	2. Shows care and concern for staff well-being
7. Encourages employees' development	3. Actively facilitates the training and development of staff
8. Makes recommendations for work improvement	4. Helping, supporting and guiding staff
9. Takes into account employees' suggestions	5. Actively listens to and seeks the ideas/suggestions of staff in decision making/problem solving
10. Solves problems in an effective manner	6. Quickly addresses and resolves problems, and/or takes action to prevent problems arising
Divergent	**Divergent**
11. Works hard and is always ready to cooperate when work is excessive	7. Sets clear standards, schedules work effectively, and monitors/controls staff performance and behaviour
12. Provides good customer service	8. Comes to the defense of staff under threat from outsiders
13. Makes special concessions to employees	9. Communicates well with staff and keeps them informed on planned organizational changes that will affect them
14. Makes decisions in a fair manner	10. Reprimands staff in private
15. Does not make employees feel bad when they make mistakes	

Negative Behavioural Statements	Negative Behavioural Statements
Convergent	**Convergent**
1. Favors some employees over others based on friendship not performance 2. Does not distribute work	1. Is unfair, inconsiderate and/or inconsistent in the way staff are treated
3. Exhibits an arrogant and rude attitude 4. Lacks professionalism	2. Exhibits selfish/ self-serving behaviour 3. Gets angry and yells at staff
5. Makes employees feel bad in front of others when they make mistakes	4. Belittles and demeans staff in front of others
6. Does not acknowledge problems or denies them	5. Ignores and avoids addressing poor performance, interpersonal conflict or bad staff behaviour
7. Does not communicate to employees important information	6. Omits to provide staff with clear expectations an guidance, and/or provide feedback on their performance 7. Withholds information on changes affecting staff
8. Does not recognize or reward employees	8. Deprives staff of recognition/ reward for good performance and/or of needed help/support
9. Makes arbitrary decisions	9. Manages staff in an inappropriate autocratic and/or dictatorial non listening/consultative way
10. Overloads employees with work of other people who miss work	10. Overloads staff with work
11. Does not do what he/she says he/she is going to do	11. Exhibits slackness and procrastination
Divergent	**Divergent**
12. Hires incompetent people based on friendship instead of qualifications	12. Shows lack of concern for staff safety, health, personal well-being and home life
13. Breaches company's policies	13. Poor work scheduling, direction, judgment, and control
14. Does not care about the education and	

training of employees	
15. Does not provide good working conditions and proper materials that enable employees to do their work	
16. Assumes employees are to blame for problems that occur without first investigating the situation	
17. No tolerance for mistakes on the part of the employees	
18. Fails to solve problems in an effective manner	

Our findings suggest that managers in Mexican and US organizations are perceived and judged effective when they*: i) provide reward and recognition; ii) show concern for the working conditions and for the well-being of employees in general; iii) care about the development of employees; iv) provide support and guide employees to improve their work; v) involve employees in decision making; vi) do not make employees feel bad in public; vii) are effective problem solvers.* In addition, from the *Mexican* perspective, managers are also perceived effective when they: *work hard and are team players; provide good customer service; make decisions in a fair manners, are flexible to make special concessions to employees, and do not make employees feel bad when they mistakes.*

Furthermore, from the 'US' perspective, managers are also perceived effective when they: *set expectations clearly and they are effective at planning work and monitoring performance; effectively maintain employees well informed, and reprimand employees privately and not in public.*

Conversely, managers are perceived ineffective by both Mexican and US managers and non-managerial employees when they fail to exhibit the type of positive (*effective*) managerial behaviours outlined above, but also when they: *i) show favouritism towards certain employees; ii) exhibit rude, arrogant, and selfish behaviour; iii) make employees feel bad in front of others, iv) avoid acknowledging problems including problems related to poor performance and conflict among their employees; v) do not communicate important information that affects employees; vi) do not provide*

reward and recognition; vii) make arbitrary and autocratic decisions, viii) overload employees with excessive work; ix) slack and procrastinate to address issues.

Additionally, from the 'Mexican perspective,' managers are perceived ineffective when they *hire incompetent people based on friendship and not on qualifications, break company policies, do not care about the training and development of employees, fail to provide good working conditions, exhibit intolerant behaviour towards mistakes made by employees, fail to solve problems effectively,* and *blame employees without conducting a proper investigation first.* Furthermore, from a 'US perspective,' managers are perceived ineffective when they *do not care about employees' safety and well-being* and *exhibit poor judgement, direction, control, and work scheduling planning.*

Discussion

Our cross-case/cross-nation comparison of the Mexican and US behavioural categories reveals that there are more similarities than differences, with 64% (16 of 25) of the 'Mexican' and 'US' positive (*effective)* BSs, and 71% (22 of 31) of the negative *(ineffective*) BSs being respectively congruent in meaning. Overall, 38 of the 56 compared behavioural categories are convergent in meaning. Thus, a major finding of our study suggests that to a great extent Mexican and US employees perceive managerial and leadership effectiveness in a similar manner. Another significant finding relates to the differences found between the Mexican and US perspectives about effective/ineffective managerial behaviour. Whereas Mexicans additionally emphasise the need for managers to (i) be team players, (ii) be fair decision makers; (iii) make sure employees provide good customer service; (iv) be flexible with employees' needs; and (v) be more tolerant of employees' mistakes by not making them feel bad, US workers additionally characterize effective managers as those who (i) defend their employees who are under threat of outsiders; (ii) are careful to reprimand staff in private and not in front of others; (iii) are effective communicators, and (iv) are effective planners and monitor and control performance of their staff.

However, as shown in Table 3, a close comparison of the BSs derived from the Mexican and US studies shows that some of the apparent 'divergent' Mexican +ve BSs (n=2) and -ve BSs (n=3) and some of the US +ve BSs (n=2) and one –ve BS (n=1) are 'near opposite' in meaning to certain –ve and +ve convergent or divergent US/ Mexican

BSs which leads to 80% of the combined Mexican/US +ve BSs and 84% of the Mexican/US –ve BSs being convergent in meaning.

Table 3 Juxtaposed 'Divergent BSs Against 'Near Opposite in Meaning' BSs

Divergent Mexican Behavioural Statements	Near Opposite in Meaning US Behavioural Statements
P 14 . Makes decisions in a fair manner	N 1. Is unfair, inconsiderate and/or inconsistent in the way staff are treated)
P. 15. Does not make employees feel bad when they make mistakes	N 3. Gets angry and yells at staff [when they make mistakes]
N. 14. Does not care about the education and training of employees	P.3. Actively facilitates the training and development of staff)
N. 16. Assumes employees are to blame for problems that occur without first investigating the situation	P. 5. Actively listens to and seeks the ideas/suggestions of staff in decision making/problem solving
N. 18. Fails to solve problems in an effective manner	P. Quickly addresses and resolves problems, and/or takes action to prevent problems arising)
Divergent US Behavioural Statements(BSs)	Near Opposite in Meaning Mexican Behavioural Statements
P. 9. Communicates well with staff and keeps them informed on planned organizational changes that will affect them	N. 7. Does not communicate to employees important information)
P. 10. Reprimands staff in private	N. 5. Makes employees feel bad in front of others when they make mistakes)
N. 12. Shows lack of concern for staff safety, health, personal well-being and home life	P. 2. Understands employees' personal and family needs)

Despite marked cultural differences between Mexico and the US, as highlighted by cross-cultural studies (Hofstede, 1981; House *et al.,* 2004), our findings suggest that there are more similarities than differences in the perceptions of both Mexican and US employees about the behavioural effectiveness of managers. According to Hofstede's findings, Mexico and the US are significantly different in three of the four main cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance). However, our findings do not fully reflect these differences. For example, for the dimension of power distance, which may be associated with the willingness of employees to receive orders without questioning them, the scores for Mexico and the US are very different. Hofstede's comparison of Mexico and the US shows that Mexico is much higher in power distance than the US. This finding may imply that Mexicans may consider managers who are authoritarian as effective. Our findings do not support this assumption. In contrast, our study shows that Mexican and US workers perceive as effective, those managers who involve employees in decision making.

With regards to Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance, which may contribute to the employees' need for security, clear rules, and clear guidance, his findings indicate that Mexico and the US are significantly different. According to Hofstede, Mexico is considerably higher than the US on this dimension, suggesting that Mexican employees may have a higher need than US employees for clear direction and clear communication from their managers. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that both, Mexican and US employees consider as effective those managers who provide support and guidance/direction to subordinates.

Our findings provide support for Hofstede's cultural dimension of masculinity in both countries. As both Mexican and US employees perceive as effective those managers who provide reward and recognition which is a characteristic associated with masculine societies. Additionally, our research suggests that Mexicans still value a collectivist approach as indicated by Hofstede's study. This is suggested by the finding that Mexican employees consider effective those managers who are team players and are ready to give a hand whenever this is needed.

With regards to the GLOBE study, our findings appear not to fully support some cultural differences between Mexico and the US as found in that study. According to the GLOBE research, the leadership behaviours found to be culturally contingent are: charismatic, team-oriented, self-protective, participative, humane-oriented, and autonomous. The results of GLOBE study indicate that Mexico and the US differ in three of these behaviours: self-protective, participative, and humane oriented. For example, Mexico scored significantly lower than the US in terms of participative leadership as being an effective leadership behaviour. Our findings show that as in the case of the US, Mexican employees also prefer a participative leadership style over an authoritarian one. Furthermore, different from the GLOBE study that shows Mexican employees as not having high preference for human oriented employees, our findings suggest as in the case of the US, Mexican employees do consider being human oriented as an effective managerial behaviour. Additionally, the findings of GLOBE show that Mexican employees compared to US employees may encounter self-protective managers as more acceptable. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that both the Mexican and US employees consider ineffective those managers who exhibit selfish

behaviour which is a characteristic associated with being self-protective or self-serving. However, it is important to highlight that the GLOBE study was focused on the *'strategic leadership'* of general managers while the leadership element of the focus of the two managerial behaviour studies that have provided the empirical source data for our study was specifically on the *supervisory leadership* component of the everyday managerial task performed by managers at all levels.

Although our findings suggest that Mexican and US employees perceive the behavioural effectiveness of managers in a similar manner to a great extent, there are still some differences that are important to highlight and discuss. For example, two of the Mexican positive BSs not found to be directly or indirectly congruent in meaning with any effective or ineffective US BSs-which suggest Mexican employees value managers who are ready to cooperate with employees when work is excessive and who make special concessions to employees- could be associated with paternalism. Paternalistic leadership is found typically in societies that are collectivistic and have high power distance like Mexico. This finding, when taken into context with the finding that Mexicans may prefer participative leadership, could suggests that leadership in Mexico may be changing from being paternalistic-authoritarian, as consistently categorized (e.g. Stephens and Greer, 1995; Dorfman and Howell, 1988; Miramontes, 2008), to a more paternalistic-participative approach.

The Mexican ineffective BS relating to hiring incompetent people based on friendship instead of qualifications is also significant given that Mexico has been traditionally considered a collectivist society (Hofstede, 1980). In collectivistic societies it is not uncommon that hiring may be based on friendship and connections rather than qualifications. Thus, this BS may indicate a shift in Mexican values which may also be indicated by the ineffective BS relating to Mexican managers who breach company policies. That this latter BS emerged from the Mexican empirical source data is relevant due to the fact that Mexico has been considered a particularistic society while the US is considered a universalistic society (Luthans and Doh, 2014). In universalistic societies, practices and rules are consistently applied, while in particularistic societies, like Mexico, these practices/rules may be modified depending on the circumstances. Finally, the 'divergent' ineffective Mexican BS relating to managers not providing good working

conditions and materials for employees to do their jobs might be explained by the difference in financial ability of Mexican versus US organizations.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is related to imbalance of the sampling between the Mexican and the US studies. Although the number of collected CIs was close to balanced (318 for Mexico and 392 for the US), the number of participants was not balanced. The Mexican study included 35 participants while the US study included 81 participants. Even though the number of participants of the Mexican study was appropriate for qualitative research (n=20 to 40) (Cresswell *et al.,* 2003), there is always the possibility that more behavioural categories of both effective and ineffective behaviour could have been identified with a larger sample of participants. A second limitation of the study is related to the number of male and female participants which is not balanced for both studies. Nevertheless, research suggest that gender might not have a definitive role on leadership styles (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Powell, 1990; Morgan, 2004; Mohr and Wolfram, 2008; Kent *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, while our findings suggest that culture may not play a significant role on the perception of managerial and leadership effectiveness, we suggest that more studies using different methods and larger samples must be performed before concluding that Mexican and US employees perceive managerial and leadership effectiveness in a similar manner.

Implications for HRD practice and research

Our comparative study on managerial and leadership behavioural effectiveness offers a more comprehensive understanding of what Mexican and US employees expect from managers. The findings of our study suggest that there are more similarities than differences between Mexican and US employees about the perception of effective/ineffective managerial behaviour. However, our study also found that there may be practices that Mexican managers may not address when managing US employees. By the same token, there may be managerial practices that US managers may not consider when managing a Mexican workforce.

The findings of our study may be relevant for HRD professionals in both Mexico and the US when providing training to expatriates for international assignments. Emphasising those managerial practices that are perceived as effective and avoiding

those practices that are perceived as infective could enhance the relationship between managers and subordinates and therefore their performance. Research suggests that alignment between the perceptions of managers and their subordinates will have a positive impact on organizational performance (Testa, 2001).

Conclusion and recommendations

In this study we have compared the perception of the Mexican and US workforce about managerial and leadership behavioural effectiveness. Our findings suggest that despite important differences between Mexico and the US as highlighted in various cross-cultural studies, there are significantly more similarities than differences between Mexican and US employees about their perceptions of effective and ineffective managerial behaviour. These findings suggest that culture may not have a definitive role in determining how employees in Mexico and the US perceive and judge the managerial and leadership behavioural effectiveness of managers within their respective organizations. Our findings support the existence of a universal set of managerial behaviours that could be effective across countries.

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