

Revisiting the moderating role of culture between job characteristics and job satisfaction: a multilevel analysis of 33 countries

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper addresses how national culture moderates the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – We examine the most recent data collected from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in 2015 from a group of 33 countries. Hofstede’s cultural model is used to represent and measure national culture.

Findings – one of the most significant findings from our two-level regression analysis is that having an exciting job contributes more to job satisfaction in individualistic countries than in collectivist countries. We also find that the newly introduced cultural dimension indulgence vs restraint has some significant moderating effect on the relationship between job security, salary, perceived interest of a job and job satisfaction. Job security also seems to contribute less to job satisfaction in societies that are long-term oriented.

Practical implications – Our study provides further support for a more careful, nuanced examination of job motivation theories. Multinational companies should understand the needs of their employees and diversify their compensation packages accordingly. More attention should be paid to job design in individualistic or indulgent-oriented countries to create a satisfying job experience.

Originality/value – We examine the most recent data from ISSP and extend the literature by incorporating two additional cultural dimensions from Hofstede’s model as moderators.

Keywords - Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, national culture, job characteristics, job satisfaction, ISSP

Paper type - Research paper

1. Introduction

The term 'work values' refers to "what a person consciously or subconsciously desires, wants or seeks to attain related to his/her individual and collective work activities" (Locke, 1976). Similarly, Chen and Choi (2008) describe work values as the underlying preferences and opinions that should be met in people's career choices that can result in job satisfaction. According to Gahan & Abeysekera (2009) and Newman & Nollen (1996), developing a more in-depth understanding of employee work values is a key element to organizational success as workforces are becoming increasingly diverse through the internationalization of business. More specifically, Ralston et al. (1997) argue that one of the most pressing issues facing MNCs worldwide is the sheer complexity of understanding and reconciling the diverse work-related value systems of their multi-domestic operations. Unsurprisingly then, over the last few decades, the heated debate on whether the cross-societal values of MNCs' respective workforces are converging or otherwise rages on (see, for instance, Ralston et al., 1993). In fact, the very meaning of work, workers' needs, and the job characteristics that people value have been shown to differ quite considerably from culture to culture. Asians, for example, are found to have a stronger need for social affiliation and group cohesion in the workplace (Huang and Vliert, 2004). Workers from the Netherlands, by contrast, are more committed and engaged at work when given job autonomy. (England, 1986; Hofstede, 2003; Luthans and Doh, 2009; Roe et al., 2000; Sagie et al., 1996). Other scholars (e.g. Kang, Matusik & Barclay, 2017; Hong and Varghese, 2018) similarly establish that in Western societies such as the United States and Germany, there is a strong preference for egalitarian work culture. In comparison, workers from Eastern firms such as those in Japan, China and Korea are more inclined to accept hierarchical work values and prioritise interpersonal relationships as well as loyalty to the team. Put simply, specific job attributes/characteristics do not uniformly motivate people.

One of the key theories that draw a link between job attributes, motivation and other work-related outcomes is the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). Its central proposition is that certain core characteristics of a job affect the individual employee's psychological state, impacting work-related outcomes such as motivation, job satisfaction, employee performance, and retention. Empirically, there are studies that tested the

validity of the JCM, partly within the context of uncovering positive relationships between certain job characteristics and attitudinal as well as behavioural reactions (see, for instance, Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson, 2007; Clark, 2015; Blanz, 2017).

On a related development, there is also a stream of literature that investigates how various job characteristics promote job satisfaction using extensive, renowned data sets such as the World Values Survey (refers to a series of representative national surveys in almost 100 countries) and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Based on the jobs-/work-related data derived from such surveys, Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) find that certain job facets such as “having an interesting job” and “good relations with managers” are solid and universal determinants to job satisfaction, while others such as pay and job security tend to be more country-specific. On the other hand, Timming (2010) examines cross-national variations in job satisfaction determinants using a sample of 31 European countries. Job security and opportunities to learn and grow are found to be robust cross-nationally, while the effects of other job characteristics are more dependent upon distinctive national contexts. Another cross-cultural study conducted by Andreassi and colleagues (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff & Rutigliano, 2012) sample a group of 48 countries from Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America. Similarly, certain aspects such as accomplishment and recognition are found to be the strongest drivers of overall job satisfaction across the globe, while the effects of other job attributes vary from one cultural group to another. Teamwork, for example, was found to lead to a more satisfying job experience in collectivist Asian countries. However, neither Souza-Poza (2000), Timming (2010) nor Andreassi et al. (2012) explicitly explore what actual contextual factors help to account for the considerable cross-country variations that they have uncovered.

Previous research links certain cross-country differences as antecedents to job satisfaction. These country-level variables are typically related to the cultural aspects that are distinctive to each nation where they collectively ‘create’ an environmental context where certain values are preferred over others. For example, a recent paper by Mironski and Lenk (2016) explicitly incorporates national culture as a variable that moderates the impact of job characteristics on job satisfaction with large-scale international data. The authors use Geert Hofstede’s landmark study to define national culture, which is decomposed into six dimensions:

power distance, achievement orientation (or sometimes called masculinity-femininity), individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term/ short-term orientation and indulgence-restraint. More specifically, they utilise the first two dimensions, i.e. power distance and achievement orientation, as country-level moderators in their hierarchical linear models. Overall, they find no empirical support for the predicted significant cross-level interaction effect.

Hauff, Richter and Tressin (2015) adopt an approach that is similar to Mironski and Lenk (2016) but incorporate two additional measurements of cultural dimensions into their empirical analysis (performed on a sample of respondents across 24 nations from the International Social Survey Program 2005, ISSP). Their findings indicate that certain characteristics of national culture explain some of the cross-country differences in the antecedents of job satisfaction. However, the data used in their study only extends until 2005, even though the most recent ISSP data available now extends to 2015. Hence, the earlier studies address results based on 2005 data which are considered outdated. The contribution of this study is, therefore, two folded. First, this study incorporates an updated database on job satisfaction and national cultures (ISSP 2015 and 33 countries). Using the updated and most recent database, the study's findings will merit a more realistic and meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge. Second, previously authors did not include “Long-/Short-Term Orientation” and “Indulgence vs Restraint”, which are two new critical components of Hofstede’s Cultural Model (Hauff, Richter & Tressin, 2015; Mironski & Lenk, 2016). The “Indulgence vs Restraint” dimension, being the most recently proposed one, has received little attention in the literature. In response to these deficiencies in earlier research, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by incorporating the two new dimensions as a moderator between job characteristics and job satisfaction.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Job design-related research dates back a few centuries as scrutiny on the nature of the division of labour can be traced back to the time of Smith’s (1776) and Babbage’s (1835). Back then, the contention is that employees' productivity would increase if jobs were broken-down into parts that consist of simple tasks. The underlying premise is that employees' productivity is fuelled by simplification and specialisation. In this regard, Taylor (1911) also emphasises the logic

of ensuring an efficient division of labour in his renowned work *The Theory of Scientific Management*. However, throughout the course of the 20th Century, many researchers and practitioners come to the realisation that employees' motivation, satisfaction as well as overall well-being are also pertinent aspects in maintaining a productive workforce over the longer-term. Unsurprisingly then, in attempts to address the complex psychological and physiological needs of employees, a plethora of theories and frameworks were developed to guide managers worldwide in terms of making improvements to all aspects of job design.

One of the most well-known theories concerning the relationship between job design and the psychological well-being of workers is the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). It describes how certain job characteristics impact employees' personal experience with the job and, subsequently, work-related outcomes. More specifically, the model suggests that several key job dimensions will lead to positive psychological states of individual workers. It includes skill variety, task identity, task significance, the degree of autonomy and the nature of feedback provided. By providing and enhancing these elements in the overall job design, workers are predicted to respond positively, leading to high work motivation, improved job performance, low absenteeism and high job satisfaction (Faturouchman, 1997). For example, in their experimental study, Rodriguez et al. (2016) find that the combination of certain managerial practices such as praise for high performance, regular feedback, and lean techniques would enhance perceived job autonomy, which is then associated with greater job satisfaction. Blanz (2017) test the JCM with a group of social workers in Germany and confirm positive and significant correlations of job satisfaction with all the major job characteristics given in the JCM. More recently, Keena and colleagues (2018) test the JCM with a sample of employees working at the prison. They find that additional job characteristics such as role clarity and quality of supervision are associated with greater job satisfaction while job autonomy is non-significant.

Another influential theory that describes the relationship between certain job characteristics and job satisfaction is Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1966). According to the theory, job characteristics can be differentiated between intrinsic (or "motivator") and extrinsic (or "hygiene") aspects. The intrinsic worth of a job comes directly from performing a task itself, such as autonomy, challenge and professional development, whereas extrinsic aspects

are something more external to be supplied by the organisation, such as pay, job security and working conditions (Mahaney and Lederer, 2006; Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017). Empirical studies have lent support to the proposition that both factors serve as important motivators for employees, leading to higher job satisfaction. In a recent study, Singh and Bhattacharjee (2020) investigate the significance of Herzberg's theory in the field of academics. Factors such as working conditions, responsibility, growth opportunities, status and salary/job security are found significantly contributing to job satisfaction among a group of Indian academicians. In addition, cross-cultural studies have suggested that the link between certain intrinsic job characteristics (empowerment and recognition) and job satisfaction is somehow stronger among individualistic countries and countries with smaller power distance (Adigun and Stephenson, 1992; Huang and Van de Vliert, 2003; Hui, Au and Fock, 2004).

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede can be considered as one of the founding fathers in the field of cross-cultural management. His seminal study conducted with IBM workers from 64 countries has produced a well-known framework that is extensively used in cross-cultural research worldwide (Browaeyes and Price, 2015). Hofstede posits that national cultures are relatively stable and developed a dimensional approach to cross-cultural comparison. His early study in 1980 reveals four dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. A fifth one, called long-term orientation, was later added to the framework, based on a Chinese Values Survey study (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). More recently, Hofstede and his research team add a sixth dimension called indulgence versus restraint, using data from the World Values Survey to capture a sense of happiness and freedom in life (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov and Vinken, 2008).

3.2 Power distance

The power distance dimension describes the extent to which inequalities in status and power are accepted as being normal in a society. Countries with a high power distance respect authority and maintain strict social hierarchies (Hofstede et al., 2010). This tendency also manifests itself

at the firm-level, where decision-making is usually more centralised and less participative. In addition, subordinates display a high degree of deference and loyalty to their leaders and expect to receive instructions from the above. Because of the more authoritarian leadership styles that are typically practised in higher power distance countries, empowerment and independence at work are less likely to be seen as desirable as compared to cultures displaying low power distances (Aryee and Chen, 2006; Chow et al., 2005; Hofstede, 1991, Michailova, 2002). Conversely, in low power-distance countries, equality and freedom are strongly valued. Employees are in favour of leadership styles that are more consultative in nature as they are more comfortable with open communications with superiors with lesser regard to hierarchical positions (Miroński and Lenk, 2016; Newman and Nollen, 1996). We predict:

H1: The lower the power distance score of a country, the stronger the positive relationship between independence at work and job satisfaction.

3.3 Individualism versus Collectivism

The individualism vs collectivism dimension describes the extent to which individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive groups. People from an individualistic culture see themselves as autonomous, unique individuals. Personal freedom and control in life are typical characteristics that are highly prized (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2012). On the contrary, individuals who live in more collectivist societies usually exhibit a more 'interdependent' sense of self (Lu and Gilmour, 2004, 2006; Yamaguchi and Kim, 2015). This is because the priority is often given to conforming to social affiliation, group harmony and collective welfare rather than personal interests (Madhavan, 2011).

Hui and Yee (1999) are among the first who study how the individualism-collectivism tendency may interact with work conditions in predicting employees' job satisfaction. They find that ethnic Chinese individuals who score highly on the collectivist dimension do indeed have stronger needs for social affiliation than for job autonomy (pg. 178). It is contended that a warm and congenial work environment brings more satisfaction in the workplace for the collectivists but less for the individualists.

Huang and Van de Vliert (2003, 2004) similarly find evidence that the individualism-collectivism dimension moderates the link between job characteristics and job satisfaction. They suggest that workers in countries that value individualism are 'socialised' to develop higher-order needs for self-esteem and self-fulfilment. The desire for self-expression means that they are more motivated by jobs with intrinsic characteristics such as the opportunities to use one's skills and abilities. Kuman (2003) argues that there is a well-documented cross-cultural difference in the level of self-enhancement between the individualist West and certain collectivist countries. The former is found to have a stronger motive of self-enhancement, which is vital to the self-esteem and subjective well-being of the individuals. Kinsky et al. (2000) and Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne (1991) similarly suggest that managerial practices and compensation strategies in individualist countries need to take into consideration certain traits such as ambition and determination because employees in those countries tend to value personal recognition and accomplishment. Individuals who score highly on the collectivism scale, on the other hand, place considerably greater emphasis on cultivating strong bonds/relationships with their peers. Therefore, a higher priority is given to reinforcing one's social affiliation rather than having challenging jobs.

In individualistic cultures, more emphasis is also given to intrinsic attributes related to the interest of the job (Kaasa, 2011). For example, in comparison to Hong Kong Chinese employees, the British and Americans rank interesting work as the most important work outcome (Akhtar, 2000). This is supported by Joshanloo and Jardon (2016), who suggest that personal interests and enjoyment are regarded as a more central ingredient of well-being in individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures. Hence:

H2a: The higher a country scores on the individualism dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between independence at work and job satisfaction.

H2b: The higher a country scores on the individualism dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between the perceived interest of a job and job satisfaction.

H2c: The higher a country scores on the individualism dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between career advancement opportunities and job satisfaction.

H2d: The higher a country scores on the collectivism dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between connection with others at work and job satisfaction.

3.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

Individuals who belong to relatively high uncertainty-avoidance cultures are less comfortable with ambiguity or uncertainty, and therefore display a high preference for precision, predictability and clear guidance (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). In the workplace, managers are likely to avoid uncertainty by providing stability for their subordinates and establishing more formal, detailed rules (Andreassi et al., 2014). Employees tend to be less ambitious, more risk-averse, and see job insecurity as threatening (Alder, 1997; Hauff et al., 2015). This is supported by Adler and Gunderson (2008), who find that in high uncertainty-avoidance countries, there is more focus on providing employees with greater career stability, such as offering lifetime employment. In a study of work values of the business, government, and non-profit employees, Jaskyte (2016) also finds that for countries high on uncertainty avoidance, such as Germany and South Korea, a safe job with no risk was the most important work values for employees in all sectors, followed by a good income. Parboteeah and his colleagues (2013) similarly show that certain national culture variables were related to intrinsic and extrinsic values. The preferences for extrinsic work values such as income, job security, and less demanding work increase with the uncertainty avoidance scores for individual countries.

By contrast, in low uncertainty-avoidance countries, risk-taking is more welcome, and there is higher job mobility. Hofstede (2003) also argues that workers from a low uncertainty-avoidance culture are more strongly motivated by risky ventures and fast-track advancement. This view is shared by Kaasa (2011), who suggests that ‘lower levels of uncertainty avoidance allow more ambitious values: people put more emphasis on initiative and achievement that are connected to risk in a sense’ (pg. 859). Hence, we predict:

H3a: The higher a country scores on the uncertainty avoidance scale, the stronger the positive relationship between job security and job satisfaction.

H3b: The higher a country scores on the uncertainty avoidance scale, the stronger the relationship between income and job satisfaction.

H3c: The lower a country scores on the uncertainty avoidance scale, the stronger the positive relationship between career advancement opportunities and job satisfaction.

3.5 Masculinity versus Femininity

In predominantly masculine societies, competition and personal achievement are regarded as essential values. Individuals who belong to more masculine societies generally have a strong desire for acquiring power, dominance, material wealth and success (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). This strong achievement orientation is typically reflected in the merit-based reward practices established in the workplace, where workers exhibit a preference for challenging tasks and career advancement (Newman and Nollen, 1996; Sparrow and Wu, 1998; French, 2010). On the contrary, countries that score highly on the femininity scale are characterised by a higher need for developing good interpersonal relations with co-workers rather than strong competition with one another (Hodgetts, Luthans and Doh, 2006; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). The emphasis is on working with people who cooperate well with one another as opposed to competing for advancement to high-level jobs. “In feminine cultures, a humanised job should give more opportunities for mutual help and social contacts” (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, p. 169). In fact, qualities such as being caring and nurturing are considered to be more important than assertiveness or ambitiousness. Furthermore, feminine societies value incentives, such as flexibility and free time. A proper work-life balance is important to achieving overall well-being, as opposed to ‘living to work’ in masculine cultures, where work centrality is much higher and long-working hours is the norm (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). This is supported by Lyness and Kropf (2005), who find that nations characterised as having feminine cultures tend to have organisational cultures that support work and family balance.

Hence:

H4a: The higher a country scores on the masculinity scale, the stronger the positive relationship between career advancement opportunities and job satisfaction.

H4b: The higher a country scores on the masculinity scale, the stronger the positive relationship between income and job satisfaction.

H4c: Having a job where one can help others leads to more job satisfaction in more feminine countries than in masculine countries.

H4d: The lower a country scores on the masculinity scale, the stronger the positive relationship between job security and job satisfaction.

3.6 Long-term versus Short-term orientation

The long-term vs short-term dimension refers to a society's perspective on time (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Conceptually, this dimension is somewhat similar to the 'past-present-future' construct identified by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (as detailed in Hills, 2002). More specifically, societies that are more long-term oriented are more prepared for the future and therefore attach greater importance to patience, perseverance and thrift. Such cultural traits are said to be more commonly found in Asian countries, especially those with a Confucian heritage (Francesco, 2015). In contrast, low long-term oriented, i.e. short-term oriented cultures attach a more vital need towards immediate gratification, and there is a social pressure toward spending and consumption (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Webley and Nyhus (2006) echo the concept that long-term orientation is associated with a preference for saving rather than spending left-over-money. Therefore, we conceive that high income is viewed as a desirable job characteristic in short-term orientated cultures, as it helps to fulfil the need of spending and consumption:

H5: The lower a country scores on the long-term orientation dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between income and job satisfaction.

3.7 Indulgence vs Restraint

The indulgence vs restraint dimension is a relatively recent addition to Hofstede's original dimensions. It refers to the extent to which natural desires and enjoyment in life need to be 'regulated' by social norms (Minkov and Hofstede, 2010). More specifically, highly indulgent cultures are those that accept individual pursuit of hedonic gratification via active engagement with fun and pleasure-related leisurely activities. By contrast, societies characterised by high degrees of restraint tend to tightly suppress certain hedonic desires and needs. This is why some

have regarded the indulgence vs restraint dimension as being analogous to Schwartz's hedonism value, which is about pleasure-seeking (De Mooij, 2010). According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), indulgence-restraint helps to explain why the poor in the Philippines (a more indulgence-oriented society) are happier than the rich in Hong Kong (higher on restraint orientation).

Since this dimension is relatively new, a systematic search of the management literature revealed scant empirical evidence of its association with job-related outcomes or organisational behaviour. We, therefore, make inferences based on the core values of indulgent cultures, which give priority to pleasure, fun and freedom. Conceivably, workers are more likely to stay in their jobs for self-fulfilment and interest rather than for a paycheck or a job title. On the contrary, the restraint cultures practice rigid codes of beliefs and behaviour that promise certainty and conformity (Al Omoush, Yaseen, and Alma'Aitah, 2012). As a result, attention is directed towards predictable and stable routine activities as well as tangible rewards external to the job itself, such as salary and job security (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016). Zhou, Jin, Fang and Vogel (2015) similarly propose that hedonic value is deemed to be more important by people espousing an indulgent culture.

In this regard, we posit:

H6a: The higher a country scores on the indulgence dimension, the stronger the positive relationship between the perceived interest of a job and job satisfaction.

H6b: The higher a country scores on the indulgence dimension, the weaker the positive relationship between job security and job satisfaction.

H6c: The higher a country scores on the indulgence dimension, the weaker the positive relationship between income and job satisfaction.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Data collection

The data analysed in this study comes from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). The ISSP is an on-going international research project addressing topics that are important for social science research. We examine one of the ISSP modules called "Work Orientations", which

mainly covers issues related to respondents' perceptions towards work arrangement, job characteristics, attitude towards work and private life and other subjective 'experiences' around their own job. This module series was started in 1989 and subsequently followed by two waves fielded in 1997 and 2005. The 2015 dataset was made available since August 2017, and it represents the latest round of the fieldwork. (Data and detailed documentation are freely accessible from the ISSP archive on the GESIS website: <https://www.gesis.org/issp/home/>). The current study comprises thirty-three nationally representative samples for which data is available on all individual- as well as country-level variables. Within-country data is collected by national research institutes via both face-to-face interview and self-administered questionnaire. Multistage probability sampling is used to recruit participants aged 18 years and older in each of the participating countries. The national data is also typically weighted by factors such as gender, age, income, education level, and region of residence (ISSP Research Group, 2017). The list of countries, national-level means of job satisfaction and GDP per capita are reported in Table 1. In total, it yields an overall sample size of n= 46,656 respondents. There is no question in the survey that addresses the respondent's nature of work or title (i.e., whether it is managerial or non-managerial), and so we take the whole national samples in analysing the data.

Table 1 (insert here)

4.2 Measurement scales

4.2.1 Independent Variables

Job Characteristics. We take the eight survey questions on how respondents assess different aspects of their jobs, measured by five-point scales (see Table 2). The questions capture both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of a job, such as autonomy, security, social connection, rewards and opportunities. While there are no direct measurements in ISSP for other job characteristics given in JCM, such as skill variety, task identity, task significance and feedback, some questions are redolent to the JCM characteristics. We reason, to some extent, that perceived interest of the job can be associated with skill variety. A monotonous job with repetitive tasks and no exposure to new or challenging activities may not be seen as very interesting or satisfying.

Meanwhile, the questions that ask to what degree respondents feel their job is “useful to society” and “can help other people” tap into the feeling of the meaningfulness of work. This can be treated as a proxy for task significance. A 5-Point Likert scale is used to gauge the responses to each of the job characteristics questions, and we reverse coded the scale so that ‘1’ represents ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘5’ ‘strongly agree’.

Table 2 (insert here)

4.2.2. Dependent Variable

Job Satisfaction. Job Satisfaction is a term that has been utilised in a rather ‘loose’ manner within and across many business disciplines. For the purposes of our study, we made use of Hulin, Judge, and Dalal’s (2009) definition where job satisfaction is regarded as the internal evaluations of one’s job (either outwardly or inwardly) and can be evaluated along a good/bad, positive/negative continuum. In this regard, we found one item from the ISSP that directly measures job satisfaction. It reads, “How satisfied are you in your (main) job?” Answers are measured by a seven-point Likert scale, and they are recorded so that ‘1’ is ‘Completely dissatisfied’ and ‘7’ ‘Completely satisfied’.

4.2.3 Moderating variables

National Culture. Hofstede (2003) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. National culture, our moderator, is measured by the national scores on each of Hofstede’s world-renowned cultural dimensions (see Table 3). The numbers are extracted from the Hofstede’s Centre (Hofstede, 2013), present for all the thirty-three countries that make up our sample.

Table 3 (insert here)

4.3 Research Framework

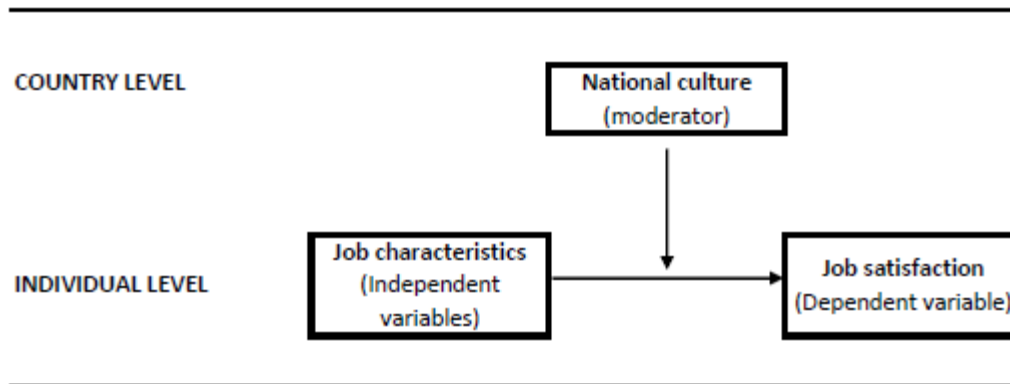


Figure 1: National culture moderating the link between job characteristics and job satisfaction

Figure 1 (insert here)

5. Data Analysis

The data structures in cross-cultural and behavioural studies are commonly referred to as *multilevel* or *hierarchically nested* because data at one level of analysis are often nested within data at another level (Kreft & Leeuw, 1998; Nezlek, 2010). Therefore, subjecting multilevel data structures to single-level analyses is unsuitable as it wrongly assumes that the relationship between variables at one level of analysis is identical across different levels of analysis (Nezlek, 2010). For instance, country-level differences are often overlooked when analysing the relationship between the dependent and independent variables at the individual level. Considering the distinctive nature of the data collected for our study, we adopt a multilevel modelling approach. More specifically, such a modelling technique is appropriate given that we are examining cross-national samples, in which individual respondents are ‘nested’ within countries. More importantly, we hypothesise that the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction is not context-free; hence, to test how these may vary as a function of national culture, multilevel modelling is essential.

Multilevel modelling is also sometimes called “Random coefficient model” (Leeuw & Kreft, 1986), “Variance component model” (Longford, 1987), or “Hierarchical linear model” (Raudenbush & Bryk, 1988). The models can be estimated using a conventional pooled approach, where the error terms at both individual- and country-levels are estimated simultaneously, or it

can be estimated using a two-step strategy (Duch and Stevenson, 2005; Gelman, 2005; Lewis and Linzer, 2005; Nezlek, 2010). Compared to the pooled strategy, a two-step approach offers greater flexibility and is equally efficient in modelling cross-cultural datasets, especially when the dataset is large (Duch and Stevenson, 2005; Jusko and Shivel, 2005; Franzese, 2005).

Our analytical procedure involves two distinctive levels. First, we begin by modelling the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction at the individual level within a country (level 1). The within-country regression coefficients are then utilised at the next stage as dependent variables to determine how within-country relationships vary as a function of national context (level 2).

For level 1 analysis, we regress job satisfaction on job characteristics, with several demographic control variables such as age, gender, education, work status (i.e., whether the respondent is in paid work, working as a trainee or apprentice, retired or unemployed, etc.), and work sectors (i.e., private or public). As for level 2 analysis, we then regress the within-country coefficients estimates on a country-level measure of culture, i.e., national cultural scores. Further, to ensure that the effect of national cultures is not confounded by other country-level factors, we control for the level of national economic development, which is predominantly measured by GDP per capita (2015; US dollars) (Haque, 2004; Michaelson *et al.* 2004). This is because certain theories, as well as existing empirical work, suggest that predictable changes in cultural values are due to increased national wealth. For instance, Inglehart and Baker (2000) postulate that modernisation brings about a gradual shift in value priorities, where values related to economic achievement become less salient to values related to individual freedom and self-expression. Huang and Van de Vliert (2003) also showed that workers from richer countries are more likely to take survival for granted, and therefore are more strongly motivated by intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards. This view is endorsed by Parboteeah and colleagues (2013), who suggested that increased post-industrialisation is negatively linked to extrinsic work values. Hence, by controlling for the effect of national economic development, we can be more confident that the moderating effect of national culture is not just a predictable consequence of economic development. Another macro-level control variable we added to the model is the national inflation rate. If prices of commodities are rising, people will demand higher wages to

compensate for the loss in purchasing power. There are also economic arguments that inflation leads to unemployment (Furuoka, 2007), in which case, extrinsic job attributes such as income and job security might then become more prioritised.

6. Results

We first run an exploratory factor analysis to study the structure of the job attributes shown in Table 1, using principal component methods and equamax rotation. Consistent with previous conceptions (Akhtar, 2000; Kaasa, 2011; Parboteeah, Cullen and Paik, 2013), the seven attributes are loaded into two factors, which correspond to the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of a job, or what Herzberg called the ‘hygiene factors’ and ‘motivators’. Factor 1 “extrinsic” factor consists of three items, namely, job security, high income and opportunities for career advancement. These attributes can be viewed as less related to the nature of the job itself but something to be controlled by the organisations or supervisors (Park and Word, 2012). Factor 2 “intrinsic” factor contains the remaining five items, which largely relate to the non-financial, psychological aspects of the job. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 (insert here)

Table 5 (insert here)

Figure 2 (insert here)

We summarise the model estimates of the moderating role of national culture in Table 5. It shows the results of the two-level regression models, where individual country slopes between job characteristics and job satisfaction are regressed on each of the six cultural dimensions. Model 1 shows that in countries that score highly on the masculinity dimension, having job security contributes more to one’s job satisfaction with a coefficient of $\beta=0.628$, significant at 1% level. This contradicts with H4d, which predicts otherwise. Long-term orientation is also a strong moderator of the link between job security and job satisfaction, but the appeal of job security shrinks in countries with a more long-term perspective on time. Job security also matters less for

job satisfaction in countries where indulgence is a value priority, as indicated by the negative coefficient, significant at a 5% level. This is consistent with H6b.

In model 2, we see that uncertainty avoidance moderates the relationship between high income and job satisfaction positively: in countries where people dislike uncertainty, having high incomes is important to achieving job satisfaction. This is in line with H3b. Also consistent with what we predict in H6c, individuals from indulgent cultures are less likely to be extrinsically motivated by high salary: people are likely to forgo a well-paying job, potentially stressful in favour of one which brings more joy and happiness. This is indicated by a strong, negative coefficient significant at 1% level ($\beta=-0.577$).

In model 3, the link between career advancement opportunities and job satisfaction varies, depending on the degree to which a country is characterised as individualistic. The individualism/collectivism dimension has a significant positive coefficient ($\beta=0.531$), suggesting that the more individualistic a country is, the more importance is attached to career advancement opportunities, as far as job satisfaction is concerned. H2c is, therefore, supported. Another dimension, masculinity/ femininity, is an equally strong moderator at a 1% significant level. Contrary to what is predicted in H4a, career advancement opportunities are more important to achieving job satisfaction in feminine countries than in masculine countries.

The most significant moderator of all is shown in model 4. The individualism/collectivism dimension yields a coefficient of 0.622 at a 0.1% significant level, which provides strong support for H2b. This can also be seen in Figure 2, where the horizontal axis represents the country score on the individualism/collectivism dimension (with higher scores indicating a higher degree of individualism). The vertical axis represents the within-country regression slopes of job satisfaction on having an exciting job. We see that as countries become more individualistic (e.g. the UK and the US), the perceived interest in a job contributes more to job satisfaction. More collectivist countries such as China and Taiwan, located on the lower-left corner of the graph, see the aspect of having an interesting job as less relevant to job satisfaction. Another notable moderation comes from the indulgence vs restraint dimension. Its coefficient supports H6a, suggesting a strong, positive link between the perceived interest of a job and job satisfaction among more indulgent-oriented countries. Country-level inflation rate as a control variable also

has the expected sign and significance ($\beta=0-0.404$): in times with high inflation rates, the intrinsic aspect of a job such as perceived interest becomes less relevant to achieving job satisfaction.

Model 5 does not reveal any national cultural dimension to be a significant moderator. However, it shows that GDP per capita moderates the relationship between perceived usefulness of a job to society and job satisfaction: workers from more developed countries seem to experience more job satisfaction when they perceive their jobs being beneficial to society. The great majority of developed countries are fairly individualistic, in which people have a strong need for positive self-regard (Kurman, 2013). Conceivably, doing an important job that is useful to society contributes to a sense of self-worth, enhancing individual subjective well-being. There is evidence to suggest that the tie between self-worth and subjective well-being is considerably stronger in individualistic countries than in collectivist countries (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The models on the three remaining job characteristics, namely work autonomy, opportunities to help others, and personal contact, were not reported in the table as the regression models were not statistically significant.

7. Discussion and Implications

While researchers continue to stress the importance of different job characteristics in affecting the job satisfaction of employees, very few studies examine pertinent relationships in a cross-cultural context. One notable exception is the recent study by Hauff, Richter, & Tressin (2015) that investigated the cross-cultural determinants of job satisfaction using data collected from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) across 24 countries (focusing on four dimensions in the Hofstede Model). Our paper extends Hauff, Richter and Tressin's (2015) work in two ways: (1) we added the remaining two cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model, that is, long-/short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint; (2) we expanded the country coverage to 33 countries with data collected from the latest round of ISSP 2015.

Our findings suggest that the job characteristics-job satisfaction relationship does vary as a function of national culture. Consistent with Hauff, Richter and Tressin (2015) report, job security contributes more to job satisfaction in masculine countries than in feminine countries. Strong job security helps to supply the necessary extrinsic rewards highly valued by masculine

cultures, such as bonuses, pay rises, status, and privileges. Also, similar to the findings of Hauff, Richter and Tressin (2015), there is a significant cross-level interaction between national level of individualism and having an interesting job: employees from countries with high levels of individualism experience more job satisfaction if their jobs are attractive.

Individualism also moderates the relationship between opportunities for career advancement and job satisfaction in a positive way. This is predicted since, according to the Maslow hierarchy of needs model, which is primarily derived from Western thought, individualist cultures prioritise self-development and self-actualisation (Wachter, 2003). There is a strong need for positive self-evaluation compared to collectivist societies, which place a greater value on collectivist identity, conformity and group harmony (Gully, Phillips, and Tarique, 2003). Self-enhancement can be sometimes regarded as an attempt to be singled out (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Moreover, in countries like Japan and China, career promotion is usually slow, and performance is less frequently reviewed than in the United States. The reward is more likely to be based on group and company performance than individual contributions (Wehrich, 1990; xx replace).

Another significant interaction we find is between uncertainty avoidance and high incomes. This is in line with theoretical arguments since high incomes could act as a protective factor against the risk or uncertainty people might face in the future. Hauff, Richter and Tressin (2015) document that job security is not an essential determinant of job satisfaction in nations high in uncertainty avoidance, partly because the strong social safety net established in those nations helps to insure against the risks of unemployment and poverty.

One surprising finding that emerged from our study is that career advancement opportunity is a more important determinant of job satisfaction in feminine countries than in masculine countries. This contradicts Hofstede's arguments, which defines masculine cultures as those being dominated by values such as success, ambition, and competition. One plausible explanation is that masculine cultures are more likely to be male-dominant societies, where women are considered less capable than men, denied equal opportunities in the workforce, and meanwhile bear a much greater share of housework (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Hence, female employees might experience more frustration and hurdle in advancing their

careers and looking for other avenues to achieve fulfilment. In Japan, for example, after getting married, many females are to become full-time housewives. Among those who stay in the workforce, only a tiny fraction of female workers have been able to advance to a top role at public, private and non-profit organisations. Many are denied equal access to promotion opportunities (Adler, 1993).

In comparison, feminine countries promote a stronger sense of gender equality, and there is a more favourable attitude towards female participation in paid employment, hence, a higher rate of female representation in senior management positions (Annor, 2015). Societies also put less emphasis on men playing the breadwinning role, resulting in some overlapping roles of men and women. Therefore, women living in feminine societies are more empowered than their counterparts in masculine cultures. Career advancement brings job satisfaction because it is more easily achieved for both genders, with equal access to promotion opportunities.

Also, there could be differences in how masculine and feminine cultures interpret the meaning of “advancement opportunities”. Masculine cultures are likely to associate that with a pay rise or other materialistic rewards, while feminine societies may see that as a means to achieve greater job autonomy, self-expression or intellectual satisfaction of some sort. In their often-cited study of the World Values Survey, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) describe many of the feminine (and industrialised, developed) countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands as espousing ‘post-materialistic’ values, oriented towards personal freedom, liberty and self-expression. Career advancement opportunities matter, therefore, if they are seen as allowing for more progress towards self-emancipation.

An essential and lucid contribution of our study is that we incorporate two additional cultural dimensions from Hofstede’s model as moderators, namely, long-/short-term orientation and indulgent/restraint. Both have a significant moderating effect on the job security-job satisfaction relationship. Although not hypothesised, we find that job security contributes less to job satisfaction in countries that score highly on the long-term orientation dimension. It is possible that long-term oriented individuals attach more importance to their professional development over the long-run than to job security. These individuals plan their career development in stages, which sometimes entails changing jobs or companies. Job security hence becomes less important

than moving towards the right career path. This contention is supported by a recent report by Mercer (2016), the world's largest human resources consulting firm based in Germany. It shows that in the tech-focused industry, countries with high long-term orientation scores, such as China (87) and Singapore (72), have a voluntary turnover rate which is 14.06% and 13.82%, respectively. These are considerably higher than countries low in long-term orientation like Finland (38) and Greece (45), of which the voluntary turnover rate is reported to be 2% and 3% (Mercer, 2016). Zhang et al. (2006) found that career skills development over time matters more than immediate rewards or short-term gratifications for individuals with a long-term orientation. Similarly, Eskildsen and Kristensen (2010) found that remuneration (when regarded as a key job aspect) receives a lower evaluation in countries that score highly on long-term orientation.

Job security and income also matter less to workers from nations with higher scores for the indulgence dimension. Conceivably, given the fun-loving nature of indulgent cultures, people derive more satisfaction from doing what they love. Enjoyment comes from engaging in the work activity itself rather than knowing that one can keep their employees in the near future. This is indeed confirmed by our analysis, which shows that doing a job that is interesting greatly enhances job satisfaction for people coming from indulgent cultures. On the opposite, in restraint cultures, excitement and pleasure at work would be less of a contributing factor to job satisfaction because, by definition, those societies suppress gratification of needs and desires (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Workers, therefore, are more likely to be able to endure the less-than-enjoyable working condition of a job for the sake of keeping it or if they are being compensated well for doing what they are asked to do.

7.1. Managerial Implication

Our study provides significant managerial implications for employers, especially those from multinational corporations. The cross-cultural variations we discover point towards the importance of global companies to understand the employees' diverse needs and adjust their motivation and reward practices accordingly. Employees from countries like Japan, Hungary, Venezuela, Italy, and South Korea, which score high in masculinity, are more concerned with job security. Employers should encourage the provision of security incentives, such as retention bonuses or financial stability to retain employees. We argue that people from the USA, Australia,

UK, Netherlands, and New Zealand, who are considered as more individualistic, tend to be driven by the prospect of personal growth and development at work. Therefore, employers from Western and Oceania parts of the world should facilitate advancement opportunities such as participation in the decision making in the relevant capacity to fulfil the desire of the employees to realise their job potential and, therefore, increase job satisfaction. Furthermore, more attention should be given to job design in indulgence-oriented societies in order to create satisfying work environment for employees. It is important to be aware that the one-size-fits-all approach to employee motivation and well-being can hardly be effective nowadays, given the rise of cultural diversity in the workforce. Hence, we provide a launchpad to the managers with a step forward in understanding the role national culture plays in shaping one's psychological experiences at work, contributing to the continuing discussion of why and how certain job aspects can motivate people differently. It also forms the basis for the contingency role of national culture or sub-culture in linking critical job outcomes and practices.

7. Limitations and suggestions for future studies

There are several limitations in this study to be acknowledged when considering the findings. First, our measurement of job satisfaction relies on a single item scale from the ISSP. A Single-item measurement could struggle to achieve acceptable reliability when the construct it represents is broad and heterogeneous (Postmes, Haslam and & Jans, 2013). Future studies can consider the use of multiple-item measures, such as the 3-item measurement of global job satisfaction from the Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire (MQAQ; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh, 1979). This particular measurement scale has been shown to demonstrate adequate construct validity (Bowling and Hammond, 2008). On the other hand, Thompson and Phua (2012) discussed the sub-dimensions of job satisfaction measurement and proposed a four-item scale that captures affective job satisfaction more specifically. The authors argue that it is crucial to develop a comparable measure of job satisfaction that is systematically validated and invariant to cross-population by nationality, job level, and job type.

Second, our study investigates only a limited set of job facets that are available in the ISSP. They may not cover everything that is important to workers in achieving positive job

outcomes. For a more comprehensive analysis, it will be interesting to study the effect of other job characteristics such as physical working conditions, feedback, and social support received, and task variety. Another methodological issue is related to the data source. Our data analysis combines the national scores from the Hofstede project and individual responses from ISSP. There is a question of validity because the measurements of cultural values for a particular country do not come from the same group of individual respondents who answer the questions on job characteristics and satisfaction. Further, Hofstede's framework studies culture at the national level, using it as a proxy for 'work' culture. There have been critics who question the practice of treating each nation as a single case. Such an aggregation overlooks important differences at the sub-culture levels defined by ethnicity and organisation (Smith, 2002).

We suggest that future research can also look into other measurement concepts of cultural dimensions. For instance, humane orientation, with its emphasis on being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous and caring to others, could act as a moderator when one studies the link between 'perceived usefulness of a job', "perceived organisational support", and job satisfaction. One may also wish to utilize cultural dimensions from other cultural value models such as those of Schwartz to test for differences between countries. Future studies can also look into outcome variables such as job loyalty (intention to stay) or commitment, in addition to job satisfaction.

Furthermore, there could be gender differences within a single cultural context. This is particularly relevant to societies with low levels of gender egalitarianism, where the social roles of men and women are largely differentiated. One surprising finding from the current study is that the career promotion opportunity does not contribute strongly to job satisfaction among workers from masculine countries in general. We speculate that while men could well be motivated by the prospect of career advancement, female employees living in masculine societies are somehow disadvantaged by the traditional gender stereotypes, which can act as a barrier to equal access to career opportunities. Knowing that the competition is fierce and getting job promotions is more difficult for women than for men, they may turn to other avenues for self-fulfilment. According to the Japan gender gap report recently released in Mar 2019 (Yamaguchi, 2019), due to the persistence of traditional roles, the responsibility of childcare and household tasks is chiefly borne by women. Those who re-enter the job market after staying

home to raise children have minimal opportunities for regular employment, leave alone career development. It could also be the case that some women internalise the idea of subordination to men and, therefore, do not see career advancement as a desirable attribute. Future studies might investigate if such gender differences explain why 'career advancement' does not appear to be a consistent, strong motivator in masculine cultures, as opposed to feminine cultures, where both genders are more equally empowered.

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