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Culture as a Mediator between Resilience, Empathy and Commitment

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Abstract:

This study investigates the mediating impact of cultural orientations on the relationship between resilience, empathy and commitment. For this purpose data was collected from 206 IT managers based in New Delhi and NCR, India. Cultural orientations were measured by Individualism-Collectivism Assessment Inventory (ICAI) developed by Matsumoto et al, Bharathiar University Resilience Scale (BURS) by Narayanan, empathy scale named as Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) by Davis and Organizational Commitment Instrument devised by Balaji. Data analyses were performed using Hayes Process Mediation. Results revealed that cultural orientations as a whole mediate the relationship between resilience and commitment but failed to mediate the relationship between empathy and commitment. However, when individualistic and collectivistic orientations were taken separately as mediators, no mediation effect was found on the relationship between resilience and commitment and between empathy and commitment.

Keywords: Cultural orientations, resilience, empathy, commitment, mediation effect.

1. Introduction

Culture plays an important role in determining how people behave in the workplace (Hofstede, 1980). In this context, Hofstede (1980) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.” He attempted to study empirically national cultural traits and defined axes of differences between groups of corporate employees on a basis of national origin. Thus, he identified cultural differences across four independent dimensions of national cultures. These are described as individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. Among all the four dimensions, individualism-collectivism has attracted more attention. Individualism and collectivism as a national cultural dimension ought to shape up the societal elements including business and market.

Commitment is a vital concept that creates a powerful link between organization and employee because it serves as “glue that provides the vital bond between people and change goals” (Conner 1992). Meyer and Allen give three dimensions of commitment which are presented by them in a three-factor model of organizational commitment, consisting of affective, continuance and normative commitment. All these types are independent in nature and are shown by individuals at different levels in organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Affective commitment is the affective affiliation with the organization. It involves the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment is related to the tendency of staying in the organization due to the expenses of turnover or benefits of staying (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Normative commitment is defined as staying in the organization without sense of coercion (or requirement). It involves the employee’s feelings of obligation to stay within the organization.

The word ‘resilience’ is derived from the Latin word *resilio* meaning ‘to jump back’ (Templeman & Bergin, 2008). Resilience has been defined as an attitude that enables the individual to examine, enhance and utilize the strengths, and other resources available to him or her. Gu and Day (2007) have noted that over the last ten years, research has contributed to the view of resilience as complex and multifaceted. Rather than being seen as an innate quality, resilience is now more typically portrayed as “relative, developmental and dynamic, manifesting itself as a result of a dynamic process within a given context”. Resilience is understood as a dynamic process by which individuals utilize available personal characteristics and ecological resources to successfully reflect on and negotiate life as it is faced (Masten, Monn, & Supkoff, 2011).

Empathy is the ability to see a situation from another person's perspective (Wang, 2007). It is defined as seeking to understand somebody else desires and goals. It involves the ability of individual parties to view the situation from the other party’s perspective in a truly cognitive sense (Chattananon & Trimetsoontorn, 2009). Empathy has a number of analogous meanings such as the golden rule, the ethic of care and an “others” orientation. Social scientists feel that empathy could be a dispositional trait or a learned behavior consisting of both a cognitive and an affective dimension (Davis, 1996; Siu & Shek, 2005). The affective component involves emotional responses to the distressed target (Davis, 1996), which may include sympathy, sensitivity, and sharing in the suffering of

other people (Schieman & Van Gundy, 2000). The cognitive feature involves the awareness of others' problems and emotions along with the capacity for role taking (Davis, 1996).

2.1. Objectives

1. To study the mediating effect of cultural orientations as a whole on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.
2. To study the mediating effect of individualistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.
3. To study the mediating effect of collectivistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.

2.2. Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant mediating effect of cultural orientations as a whole on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.
2. There would be a significant mediating effect of individualistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.
3. There would be a significant mediating effect of collectivistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of 206 managers were taken on availability and snowball bases from different IT companies (names cannot be given because of confidentiality agreement with companies) of new Delhi and NCR on the basis of permission granted by appropriate authorities for carrying out the study. To minimize the effects of other variables and make it more meaningful the following inclusion criteria were taken into account while selecting the participants

- Minimum of two years of experience
- Age ranging from 28 to 40 years

Mediation analyses were carried out taking culture as whole and individualistic and collectivistic orientations separately as mediators between commitment (as an outcome variable) and resilience (as predictor variables). For the analyses of culture as mediator as a whole, the data of 62 individualistically and 62 collectivistic ally oriented managers were combined together.

3.2. Measures

Following five measures were used in the present investigation:

3.2.1. Individualism-Collectivism Assessment Inventory (ICAI)

Individualism collectivism scale used in the study was developed by Matsumoto, Weissman, Preston, Brown and Kupperbush (1997). It consists of 16 items. The items are described in general value terms (for example, obedience to authority, social responsibility, sacrifice and loyalty etc.) rather than by specific statements tied to single actions. The 16 items are presented in relation to four social groups of interaction: 1.family 2.friends 3.colleagues and 4.strangers. The respondents were asked to rate the items on a 6-point scale. The respondents have to give rating from 6 for 'very important' to 0 for 'not important'. Increasing score indicates increasing collectivist orientation, lower score displays inclination towards individualism. ICAI has been used in a number of studies that established its internal, temporal and convergent validity (Matsumoto et al., 1993, 1994)

3.2.2. Organizational Commitment Instrument

Organizational Commitment Instrument developed by Balaji (1986) was used in the present study. It consists of 15 items and is a five point rating scale. It is widely used in organizational behaviour research in India. There are 9 positive and 6 negative items. Positive and negative item numbers are 1,2,4,5,6,8,10,13,14 and 3,7,9,11,12,15 respectively. The items were rated on a five point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The average of scores for the statement provides the index of OC, higher score indicating stronger OC. OCQ has reasonable strong internal consistency and test retest reliability the convergent, discriminate and predictive validities were of acceptable levels. The scale exhibited a very high degree of reliability as measured by cronbach alpha of 1.00.

3.2.3. Bharathiar University Resilience Scale (BURS) Form A

Resilience scale named Bharathiar University Resilience Scale (BURS) by Anna Lakshmi Narayanan (2009) was used in the study. The scale consists of 30 Likert type items and is rated on a five point scale... The responses of the participant for all the thirty statements in the scale are summed up to yield a single score on the scale representing the level of psychological resilience of the individual. The maximum score possible for a subject on the scale is 150 and the minimum score possible on the scale is 30. The scale has adequate reliability

3.2.4. Empathy Scale

Empathy scale named as Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) by Davis, (1980) was used to measure the empathy of respondents. IRI is a multidimensional scale composed of 28 self-report items designed to measure both cognitive and emotional components of empathy. The 28 items constitute four subscales of seven items each (Davis, 1980). Each of the 28 item is rated using a five point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (does not describe me well), to 4 (describes me very well). The subscale scores range from 0 to 28. The subscales of the IRI were arrived at by factor analysis and consist of 4 subscales of 7 items each: *perspective taking* (IRIpt), *fantasy scale* (IRIfs), *empathic concern* (IRIec), and *personal distress* (IRIpd). The total score on the scale ranges from 0 to 112. For each subscale, the responses were simply added to the seven items making up that scale (after first reverse-coding the negatively worded items). It produces a total potential range of 0 – 112 for the whole scale, with higher scores indicating higher empathic disposition.

4. Results

Predictor variables	Mediating variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Effect size
	Cultural orientations (β)	Commitment (β)	Resilience, empathy and commitment		
RES, EMP	& CUL	CUL & COMM	b	With Bootstrapping CI	Kappa Square
Resilience	3.07	.05	.40	$\beta = .08$, 95 CI (.03, .15)	$K^2 = .15$, 95% BCaCI {.06, .25}
Empathy	.08	.10	.28	$\beta = .00$, 95 CI (-.10, .13)	$K^2 = .00$, 95% BCaCI {.00, .01}

Table 1: Direct and indirect regression coefficients for resilience and empathy as predictors and commitment as outcome variable mediated through culture as whole (N=206)

The above Table 1 shows direct and indirect relationship among two variables resilience and empathy with individualistic-collectivistic cultural orientations together (culture as a whole). Results given in table 1 show various beta coefficients and their levels of significance. It also depicts mediation coefficients obtained with the help of Hayes's process (2013), which shows beta coefficients as well as bootstrapping confidence interval at .05 level of significance. k^2 shows size of indirect effect. Preacher and Kelley (2011) recommended that kappa-squared values are considered .01 as a small effect, .09 as a medium effect, and .25 as a large effect.

In the above table it is evident that cultural orientations significantly mediates the relationship between resilience and commitment, ($\beta = .08$, 95% bootstrapping CI {.03, .15}), as bootstrapping confidence interval is not zero and representing medium size effect as $k^2 = .15$, 95% bootstrapping CI {.06, .25}. However, cultural orientations failed to mediate the relationship between empathy and commitment ($\beta = .00$, 95% bootstrapping CI (-.10, .13), as had a negative sign in one of the intervals.

Predictor variables	Mediating variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Effect size
	Individualistic orientation (β)	Commitment (β)	Resilience, empathy and commitment		
RES, EMP	& CUL	INDIVID & COMM	b	With Bootstrapping CI	Kappa Square
Resilience	-.73	.04	.20	$\beta = .02$, 95 CI (-.00, .12)	$K^2 = .03$, 95% BCaCI {.00, .17}
Empathy	.45	-.07	-.11	$\beta = .03$, 95 CI (-.28, .06)	$K^2 = .02$, 95% BCaCI {.00, .14}

Table 2: Direct and indirect regression coefficients for resilience and empathy as predictors and commitment as outcome variable mediated through individualistic cultural orientation (n=62)

The above table shows the regression coefficients, the indirect effect and the bootstrapped confidence intervals of individualistic orientation on resilience and commitment. In the above table, it is evident that individualistic cultural orientation failed to mediate

both the relationships as bootstrapping CI values for resilience and empathy were, CI= -.00, .12, & CI= -.28, .06 respectively, each having a negative sign in one of the intervals.

Predictor variables	Mediating variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Effect size
	Collectivistic orientation (β)	Commitment (β)	Resilience, Empathy and commitment		
RES, EMP	& CUL	COLLECTIV & COMM	b	With Bootstrapping CI	Kappa Square
Resilience	.09	-.05	.01	β= -.00, 95 CI (-.08, .03)	K ² = .01, 95% BCaCI { .00, .03 }
Empathy	-.69	-.04	.07	β = .30, 95 CI (-.00, .11)	K ² = .03, 95% BCaCI { .03, .29 }

Table 3: Direct and indirect regression coefficients for resilience and empathy as predictors and commitment as outcome variable mediated through collectivistic cultural orientation (n=62)

In Table 3, it is evident that collectivistic cultural orientation failed to mediate both the relationships of resilience and empathy with commitment as CI value for resilience was CI= -.08, .03 & for empathy was CI= -.00, .11 respectively, each containing a negative sign in one of the intervals. The above results have been shown through the following models

5. Discussion

Results of Table 1 show that among two predictor variables: resilience and empathy, only resilience was mediated by cultural orientation. Thus, the results of mediational analysis show that cultural orientations together had a mediating effect only on the association between resilience and commitment. In other words, cultural orientation together affects resilience directly as well as indirectly, through influencing the level of commitment. Thus, hypothesis one which states that 'there would be a significant mediating effect of cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers', was partially proved.

This finding is supported by a study conducted by Arrington and Wilson (2000), which shows that it is within the cultural context that resources for resilience are embedded. Also, according to American Psychological Association (2003), Culture embodies a worldview developed through beliefs, values, and practices, and it is informed by historical and political forces. Thus, the cultural norms of group members foster survival of adversity, adjustment to the changes, and the future of the culture. In some cultures theoretical skills are valued, in others practical or artistic skills are important. For some, the meaning of life is to honor God, for others it is about helping the clan or tribe; still for others it is realizing their own full potential. Hence, it is important to keep the dynamic concept of culture in mind that every culture is changing, and the importance and meaning of different cultural aspects change with time (Dahl, 2001). In this continuation it can be said that resilience remains to be equally emphasized by all cultures even in the face of cultural changes. It seems equally true in organizations also.

Table 2 and 3, show that individualistic cultural orientation and collectivistic cultural orientation tested separately as the mediators of the relationship between resilience and empathy as predictor variables and commitment as criterion variable. The results indicate that, while taking separately the individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations as mediators for two predictor variables: resilience and empathy, its indirect effect did not come significant and significant mediation was not found. Thereby culture itself is a potential mediator for resilience only and individualistic and collectivistic dimensions did not come out to be significant mediators. Thus, culture as culture and not as individualistic or collectivistic culture is important and resilience is embedded in the world view developed by culture.

Hence hypothesis second which states that 'there would be a significant mediating effect of individualistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers', and hypothesis third which states that 'there would be a significant mediating effect of collectivistic cultural orientation on the relationship between commitment and resilience and empathy of managers', were rejected by the findings of the study.

Thus we can say that individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations although together mediate the relationship between resilience and not empathy and commitment but separately they are not that convincing/powerful variables to mediate the relationship between the constructs. The possible reasons for this finding are supported by the study conducted by Ramamoorthy & Carroll (1998) and Ramamoorthy & Flood (2002), they suggested that implementing teamwork, and emphasizing cooperation in the workplace might be more difficult in individualistic cultures like the United States or Ireland in comparison to collectivistic cultures. However, some studies have recently reported that Indians were more individualistic on the competitiveness dimension but more collectivist on preference for group work and supremacy of group goals than the Irish and Americans (Ramamoorthy, Gupta, Sardesai, and Flood, 2005; Ramamoorthy, Kulkarni, Gupta and Flood, 2007). The pattern of these results seems to support the contention of Sinha (Sinha, Sinha, Verma and Sinha, 2001) that in the Indian society individualistic and collectivistic orientations may coexist. Moreover, there

may exist both individualistic as well as collectivistic individuals in the same culture, which is true for Indian culture and organizations. Perhaps because of this fact, resilience is not mediated through commitment by individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations separately.

6. Conclusion

The findings of present research work showed that culture as a whole is a significant mediator only between commitment and resilience but culture did not mediate the relationship between commitment and empathy. However, when individualistic cultural orientation and collectivistic cultural orientation were tested separately as the mediators of the relationship between commitment and the two predictor variables, the results of mediational analysis showed that individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations individually did not have significant mediating effect or did not act as mediator for predicting the dependent variables. Thus, its indirect effect did not come significant and significant mediation was not found.

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