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The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The rapid acceleration of globalization across a multitude of spheres over the past 10 years has fueled increased interest in issues related to cultural diversity. Scholarly research has rarely focused on Saudi Arabia, however. This study has designed to examine the impact of cultural adjustment o tow work related attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment). Data were collected from international faculty members at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that cultural adjustment can predict international faculty members' organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity; Globalization; Job Satisfaction; Organizational Commitment; Saudi Arabia.

1. Introduction

Saudi Arabia is considered the spiritual home of Islam, with the two holiest Islamic sites (Mecca and Medina) located within its national borders. Because of this religious centrality, Saudi Arabia exerts considerable moral and political influence over other Arab nations, as well as Muslims worldwide. Saudi Arabia is also a major economic force in the Middle East, possessing the world's second largest oil reserves. The country's robust economy makes it a popular destination for immigrants seeking employment opportunities (Bel-Air, 2014). Saudi Arabia is particularly attractive to residents of poor Arab and Asian countries with few job options at home. Some governments in these countries encourage workers to emigrate for career advancement with the hope they will acquire new skills, then return to help develop their native land.

Higher education is a sector of Saudi Arabian society greatly impacted by increased cultural diversity. Policymakers and university administrators recognize the need to enrich the national academic environment and expand the research knowledge base with international faculty members. Currently, approximately 42.5% of all faculty in Saudi Arabia, a total of about 31,394 individuals, are from other countries (Ministry of Education, 2016). The vast majority of these academic appointments are directly related to the kingdom's increased focus on globalization and international collaborations.

2. Objective of the study

This study aimed to answer the following research question:
How does cultural adjustment affect international faculty members' organizational commitment and job satisfaction?

3. Literature review

3.1 Cultural Diversity in the Workplace

Cultural diversity has become a major workplace consideration for corporations and organizations in many countries (Zhu, Wanberg, Harrison & Diehn, 2015). Diversity advocates claim that a multicultural work environment beneficial for both employees and employers. They argue that bringing together different worldviews is essential to compete in today's globalized economy. The interaction of contrasting perspectives within multicultural work teams often generates new ideas and spurs creativity (Smirnova & Yachin, 2015). This creativity leads directly to organizational innovation, a hallmark of long-term success—and one less commonly seen in more homogeneous employment settings (Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999).

Diverse workplaces also exhibit better problem solving capabilities than non-diverse settings (Amaram, 2007). This may result from the value of the work produced. While diverse work groups are not necessarily more productive, their output is often of a higher quality (Pitts & Jarry, 2009). This level of increased creativity happens because employees from different cultures have different ways of thinking and can thus solve the same problem from different angles. Cultural diversity supports the growth of new ideas, strategies, and styles. Furthermore, Martin (2014) suggested that this efficiency cannot be attained when employees are homogenous.

Because of these factors, diversity advocates stress that in the modern workplace, "Global teams can be advantageous compared to national teams" (Winkler & Bouncken, 2011, p. 24). From this perspective, a multicultural employment environment that incorporates multiple perspectives into its policies, and procedures is better positioned to meet the complex challenges of interacting with in an ever more diverse and interconnected world (Pieterse et al., 2010).

However, not all research supports the value of cultural diversity in the modern workplace. Pitts and Jarry (2009) suggested that employees from different cultures face multiple challenges when working together. A major concern in such situations is poor interpersonal communication, which can result in lower quality work (Umans, 2011). Foldy (2003) argued that within multicultural employment settings, the members of a minority group become more aware of their identity, especially because they are different from the norm. Even in welcoming environments, minority individuals can feel ostracized when they do not share the cultural beliefs and practices of the majority group.

Diversity skeptics emphasized that individuals tend to work best with others who share similar beliefs and backgrounds. According to this perspective, employees surrounded by like-minded colleagues feel freer to exchange work-related thoughts and ideas than employees who work in diverse settings (Winkler & Bouncken, 2011). The mutual understanding and support in homogenous environments fosters ongoing productivity, which is the ultimate measure of organizational success. Therefore, that cultural diversity is a complex and ever-changing sociological phenomenon affecting much of the world, including Saudi Arabia. Research suggests that there are no universal advantages or disadvantages to diversity that apply to every workplace in every country (Pieterse et al., 2010). The one issue that diversity advocates and skeptics appear to agree on is the importance of ongoing communication between organizations and their employees, and between employees themselves (Umans, 2011). Organizations that embrace this communication priority, regardless of their emphasis on cultural diversity, are more likely to succeed in the long-term.

3.2 Job Satisfaction

Multiple organizational and interpersonal factors impact employee performance in modern workplace settings. As a result, there is great variation in the degree of job satisfaction. This employee attribute is described as "an attitude developed by an individual towards the job and job conditions; it is also a personal evaluation of job conditions or the results (e.g., pay, job security) of the job" (Saygi, Tolon & Tekogul, 2011,p.1395). Satisfied employees are more productive and loyal to their workplace organizations (Masum, Azad & Beh, 2015).

In university settings, job satisfaction among faculty members impacts an institution's overall academic quality, both in terms of research and instruction (Al –Smadi & Qblan, 2015). Faculty at all major universities face multiple performance pressures, along with potential tensions from competing work and home demands. Dissatisfied faculty members are less likely to achieve a healthy work-home balance; the resulting emotional stress and distraction can negatively influence both instructional and research productivity (Masum, Azad& Beh, 2015).Universitiesmust therefore monitor their faculty's degree of job satisfaction and remember its essential role in determining the relative success of the institution (Al –Smadi &Qblan, 2015).

3.3 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is an important employee attribute, which directly impacts workplace productivity and stability. Khiavi, Dashti & Mokhtari (2016) define organizational commitment as "the belief in the values and goals of the organization, a sense of loyalty to the organization, moral obligation, heart's desire and need to stay in the organization." Such commitment involves affective, continuance, and normative elements (Malik, Nawab, Naeem & Danish, 2010). Committed employees truly believe in the organizational mission, free of coercion or threats from peers and supervisors. These individuals tend to be hard workers and long-time employees (Andam, Montazeri & Feizi, 2014; Malik, Nawab, Naeem & Danish, 2010). As such, Andam, Montazeri & Feizi (2014) state that the degree of organizational commitment is a good predictor of employee performance. Employee evaluations must recognize job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workplace productivity as interrelated and interdependent factors.

4. Methodology

The population of this study was international faculty members at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. A total of 7,889 faculty members were employed at KAU. This included 5596 Saudi citizens (comprising 70% of faculty members) and 2,293 professors from abroad. The majority of non-Saudi faculty members were males (70.24%). An online survey link was distributed to all currently non-Saudi faculty members at KAU. A hundred and thirty participants started the survey for this research, and 110 participants completed all items; only completed responses were analyzed for the purposes of this study. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and simple regression analysis were used to examine the relationships between cultural adjustment (as the dependent variable) and international faculty's job satisfaction and organizational commitment (as the independent variables).

5. Findings

A Simple regression analysis was conducted to assess the ability of cultural adjustment to predict organizational commitment. The overall regression model was significant at $F(1,108) = 67.912$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.386$. The adjusted R^2 score for the regression analysis measured at 0.380 indicating that roughly 38% of the total variability found in organizational commitment (DV) can be explained by cultural adjustment (IV). The predictor variable of cultural adjustment was significantly contributed to the model with a moderate, positive impact on the model ($B=.621$, $p<.001$).

Another simple regression analysis was conducted to assess the ability of cultural adjustment to predict job satisfaction. The overall regression model was significant at $F(1,108)=61.496$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.363$. The adjusted R^2 score for the regression analysis measured at 0.357 indicating that roughly 35% of the total variability found in job satisfaction (DV) can be explained by cultural adjustment (IV). The predictor variable of cultural adjustment was significantly contributed to the model with a moderate, positive impact on the model ($B=.602$, $p<.001$). Table 5.1 summaries the results.

Table 5.2 displays the ANOVA results, there was statistical significance between cultural adjustment and organizational commitment, $F(1,108) = 67.912$, $p<.001$. In addition, there was statistical significance between cultural adjustment and job satisfaction, $F(1,108) = 61.496$, $p<.001$ (see Table 5.3). In conclusion, the model was appropriate for predicting the outcome variable.

These findings are consistent with Black et al. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are thus two clear measures of a culturally integrated foreign employee. (In addition, the degree of job satisfaction is often used to assess work-related adjustment.)

Table 5.1

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction with Cultural Adjustment as Predictor (N = 110)

Variable	Organizational Commitment			Job Satisfaction		
	B	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
Cultural Adjustment	.909	.110	.621***	0.689	.088	.602***
R^2 *Change*			.386			.363
Adjusted R^2			.380***			.357***
F			67.912***			61.496***

Note: ***$p< .001$.

Table 5.2

ANOVA for Cultural Adjustment and Organizational Commitment (N=110)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	123.919	1	123.919	67.912	.000[b]
	Residual	197.067	108	1.825		
	Total	320.986	109			

Table 5.3

ANOVA for Cultural Adjustment and Job Satisfaction (N=110)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	71.105	1	71.105	61.496	.000[b]
	Residual	124.877	108	1.156		
	Total	195.982	109			

6. Study Limitations

By addressing cultural adaptation in the Middle East, this study addresses an important gap in the public policy literature. There are, however, three key study limitations that must be acknowledged:

- This study was conducted at a single site, a large public university in the western region of Saudi Arabia. Results might differ if an identical study was conducted among international faculty members working in other regions of the country.
- Data were collected via a self-report, web-based survey. Responses to questions about job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived discrimination are inherently subjective. There is also the possibility that a participant intentionally provided misleading information. This could include providing incomplete or false demographic data to prevent the researcher or others from determining their identity.
- A total of 110 participants completed all survey items. Given this relatively small sample size, findings may not be generalizable to all international faculty members in Saudi.

7. Recommendations for future studies

- In addition to or instead of measuring job satisfaction and organizational commitment, additional studies can examine how other work-related attitudes impact adaptation. These factors might include the degree of job involvement, perceived organizational support, and employee engagement.
- A mixed-methods research design, including face-to-face interviews, might be utilized to obtain a more detailed picture of foreigners' cultural expectations and experiences.
- Additional insight could also be gained by interviewing Saudi faculty members working with international colleagues. This approach would provide multiple perspectives on the impact of cultural diversity in the workplace.
- Future researchers might compare the experiences of international faculty members in Saudi Arabia to those in other host countries. These could include nations with very different religious and cultural norms than Saudi. As a result, the complex impact of workplace diversity across multiple societies would become clearer.

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