

The Role of Culture in the Relationship between Leader Support and Innovative Behaviors: A research in Tourism Sector

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Abstract. This cultural research aims to investigate the direct effects of leader support on employees' innovative behaviors and the moderating effect of Hofstede's culture dimensions (collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and power distance) in the relation between leader support and employees' innovative behaviors. The hypotheses are tested using the data collected from a sample of 396 employees in tourism sector in Antalya, Turkey. The results demonstrate that leader support significantly improves employees' innovative behaviors in this sector. Besides, some culture dimensions have moderating roles on the association between leader support and employees' innovative behaviors. Findings indicate that the moderating role of culture varies from dimension to dimension.

Keywords: culture, collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, innovative behaviors, leader.

Jel Classification: M10, M12.

Conference topic: Modern Business Management Problems and Perspectives.

Introduction

Innovativeness has an important role and function in the progress of modern civilization. Innovativeness has become one of the most important inputs for business management in recent years. It is believed that it is positively associated with business growth, job performance and business diversification.

Nowadays managers have to deal with changing economic demands and competitive turbulent environments (Mason 2007). In today's volatile business world, worker behavior is a significant input for ensuring business effectiveness, creating competitive power and improving sustainability. To gain such power, supporting innovative behavior constitutes success criteria for contemporary organizations.

It is obvious that the world has got smaller and now it looks like a global village. Modern technological facilities improve networks and they enable people from different cultures to work and communicate. Managing people from different cultures is not easy. There are a lot of issues in this management area. It necessitates knowledge concerning cultural diversities. Dealing with different cultures also requires knowledge how to behave and be aware of cultural differences. Working with people from different cultures in the same organization requires some different management strategies (Kawar 2012).

When organizational expectations from the employees are taken into consideration, the importance of providing the expected performance becomes vital. Basically, the continual dynamic nature of work environments and the employees' preferences can also cause diversification in their mutual expectations. Culture is also one of the most important inputs of ensuring expected behaviours. There are numerous studies regarding to the relationship between culture and innovativeness on contemporary literature (e.g. Horn *et al.* 2011; Reicher 2011; Liu *et al.* 2010).

In this study, the factors associated with employees' innovative behaviors such as leader support and some cultural dimensions are also included.

Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Leadership styles play an important role in all business environments. Leaders have impacts on all factors of their business through their decisions, attitudes and behaviors. Netemeyer *et al.* (1997) define the leader support (LS) as "the importance of the support given to the employees by the leaders".

To make a group more effective, perceived leader support is one of the most important factors. It is found that workers who perceive support from their leader can be more focused on the organizational goals (Podsakoff *et al.* 1996).

Innovative behavior has become more and more important for many sectors in today's work life where the needs continually change and competition increases the market share of innovative enterprises. Especially the studies carried out in the last two decades handle the importance of innovation for business and leaders (Caldwell, O'Reilly 2003). Innovative behavior has begun to move towards flexibility and broadmindedness (Yukl 2002). Gareth defines innovativeness as "developing a new product and making new progressions in businesses" (Gareth 2001); Samuel (2000) defines it as "the use of new methods and the development of new methods in working styles".

Generally, innovative behavior cannot be defined as an integral part of a typical job. It can be defined as extra-role behavior, which refers to optional behavior that is not specified in the job description (Katz, Kahn 1978). Innovative behavior typically includes the exploration of opportunities and the creation of new ideas. In this view, there is variety of organizational and individual determinants of innovative work behavior (Mumford, Licuanan 2004). For innovative behavior, it is necessary to create an environment that is conducive to innovation. This environment which can be called innovative atmosphere is considered as the degree of organizational support for creativity and innovation perceived by employees in the work environment (Amabile 1996). It reflects the perception of the individual on his learning level and the innovation atmosphere provided by the organization (Tao, Kang 2012).

The worker's behaviours are affected by the leader's / manager's behaviors and decisions. The leaders' attitude is very important for establishing an organizational culture suitable for an atmosphere to flourish the employees' innovative attitudes.

Leaders make effort to show a performance beyond expectations by transforming the emotions, beliefs and the values of his/her follower (Rafferty, Griffin 2004). High motivation, encouraged and fostered through leader support, increases the innovative behaviors of employees (Mumford *et al.* 2002). Leaders' inspirational motivation and intellectual incentives have critical importance on employees' innovative behaviors (Elkins, Keller 2003).

Nowadays, cross-cultural differences in management are one of the most important issues for managers. Geert Hofstede, a sociologist, has been carrying out a lot of studies on employees working in international organizations (Reynolds, Valentine 2011). Hofstede defined four dimensions in order to understand other cultures, and these are individualism, collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and femininity (Reynolds, Valentine 2011).

In Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede 1984), four cultural dimensions are identified, which are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity (Ming-Yi 2006). Power distance refers to the power inequality between superiors and subordinates. In organizations with high power distance, organizational hierarchy is obvious. The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance, refers to people's tolerance towards ambiguity. In organizations with high uncertainty avoidance, there are more rules are set in order to reduce uncertainty. The third dimension, individualism-collectivism, refers to how people value themselves and their organizations. The fourth dimension, masculinity, defines the role of gender in organizations. In high masculinity organizations, very few women can get higher-level and better-paying jobs (Ming-Yi 2006).

Many empirical studies show that leadership styles have a positive and significant effect on innovative behaviors (Keller 1992; Waldman, Atwater 1994). Leaders use some different tactics to support innovative behaviors such as creating a vision, decreasing the level of stress, reducing ambiguity, supporting the employees to take initiative by providing autonomy and encouraging them to try new things and methods (Elkins, Keller 2003; Mumford, Licuanan 2004; Mumford *et al.* 2002).

Research methodology

Method

Primarily, the sample and scales which are administrated in this research are explained. Then, the research model and analysis methodology is explained. Confirmative factor analysis, correlations and hierarchical regression analyses are conducted. All hypotheses and the moderation hypotheses are tested with by the help of the hierarchical regression analyses. At the end of these analyses, the moderating effects are shown by a regression graph (Aiken, West 1991). The hypotheses and the research model are presented in Figure 1.

Participants and procedure

In this study, the data is collected from the employees of touristic facilities located in Antalya, Turkey. Approximately 6000 employees are working in this sector. 500 surveys were sent, 381 surveys were completed and sent back and 369 of them are used in the analysis.

Measures

Questionnaire method is used in this research. Cronbach's alpha scores of the scales are calculated using SPSS and the CFA is performed using AMOS. KMO and Bartlett test results are found acceptable and significant for all scales. Likert-type items are employed in all scales.

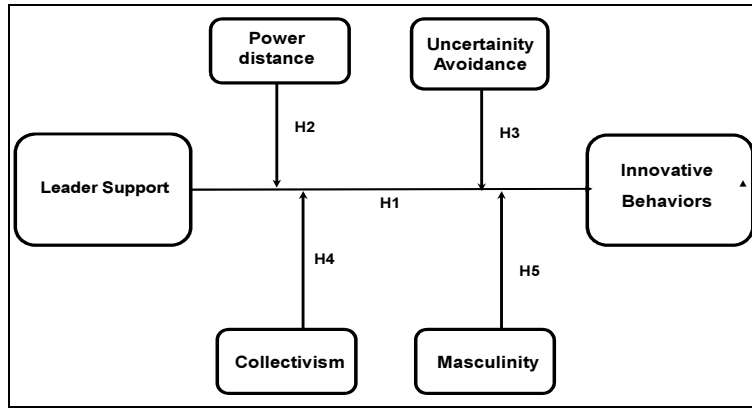


Fig. 1. Research model (Source: created by the author)

Leader Support (LS): After validation procedure, the five-item scale, developed by Netemeyer *et al.* (1997) and used by Ackfeldt and Coote (2005), is used. Their Cronbach’s alpha is .89. The data fit the one factor structure of the scale in the CFA analysis, and factor loadings are between .82 and .83 in the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

Innovative Behavior (IB): After validation procedure, the six items measured by Scott and Bruce (1994) are used. They report alpha coefficient as .89 for this measure. As a result of the CFA, it is found that factor loadings are between .59 and .80 in the EFA

Culture (PD, UA, COL, MAS): Four dimension (collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, power distance) scale developed by Hofstede (1984) is used to determine culture. This scale comprises 13 items such as “People should avoid making changes because things could get worse” and “Group success is more important than individual success”. As a result of the CFA, it is found that the data fit in the structure of the scale. Goodness of fit values of all the scales and the sub-scales are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the CFA (Source: created by the author)

Variables	X ²	df	CMIN/DF≤5	GFI≥.85	AGFI≥.80	CFI≥.90	NFI≥.90	TLI≥.90	RMSEA≤.08
1. LS	9.63	3	3.21	.99	.99	.99	.99	.99	.01
2. IB	8.8	4	2.2	.99	.96	.99	.99	.98	.05
1. PD	9.63	3	3.21	.99	.92	.98	.98	.95	.06
2. UA	8.8	4	2.2	.98	.96	.99	.98	.98	.08
2. COL	2.86	2	1.43	.97	.98	.97	.98	.99	.04
4. MAS	1.66	1	1.66	.97	.98	.99	.97	.98	.06

Findings

The results of mean, SD and correlation values of the variables are demonstrated in Table 2. The results show that leader support is related to innovative behavior and the dimensions of culture (except MAS). It is also found that innovative behavior is related to the dimensions of culture (except MAS).

Table 2. The results of correlations (Source: created by the author)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. IB	4.34	0.64	(.91)					
2. UA	5.31	1.75	-.53***	(.71)				
3. PD	3.42	2.01	-.61***	.59***	(.86)			
4. COL	5.96	1.48	-.28*	.56***	.59***	(.65)		
5. MAS	4.82	2.26	-.08	.01	.29***	.03	(.90)	
6. LS	4.36	0.68	.51***	-.46***	-.48***	-.40***	-.07	(.89)

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$; The Cronbach’s alpha shown in parentheses and all p values are $< .001$.

The hierarchical regression analysis is used to analyze the hypotheses. LS is included as an independent variable; IB of workers is included as dependent and PD, UA, COL and MAS are separately added to the research model as moderator variables (Table 3). LS PD, UA, COL and MAS variables are centralized during the process to avoid collinearity (Cohen *et al.* 2003). The results show that the relationship between LS and IB is positive and significant and variance is 32%. So, Hypothesis H₁ is supported; leader support has a positive effect on employees' innovative behavior.

Table 3. Results of moderating analysis (Source: created by the author))

Step	Innovative behavior											
	For PD			For UA			For Col.			For Mas.		
	β			β			β			β		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
LS	.57***	.34***	.33***	.57***	.48***	.52***	.57***	.58***	.54***	.57***	.57***	.61***
PD		–	–.51***									
LSxPD			–.19*									
UA					–.21*	–.23*						
LSxUA						–.20*						
COL								.03	–.01			
COLxLS									–.23*			
MAS											–.04	–.01
MASxLS												–.11
R ²	.32	.48	.52	.32	.36	.41	.32	.32	.38	.32	.32	.33
F	42***	41***	31***	43***	25***	20***	42***	21***	17***	45***	22***	15***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The variable influencing the relationship between independent and dependent variables is called “the moderator variable” (Baron, Kenny 1986: 1174). The moderating effects of the dimensions of culture are examined in order to test hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5. According to the results of hierarchic regression analysis (Table 4), power distance (PD) and uncertainty of avoidance (UA) have a moderating role in the relationship between LS and IB. In order to determine the direction of moderation, the process advised by Cohen *et al.* (2003) is followed. In this process, the significance of the relationships between LS and IB (when PD and UA are low and high) is tested by regression graphs (Aiken, West 1991) (Figs 2 and 3).

As shown in Figures 2, LS and IB's relation is positive and significant either when PD is high or low. Surprisingly, it is observed that the relationship between LS and IB is stronger when PD is low. It is also determined that over 52% of the variance of the model is explained in case of the exchange of LS and PD variables. As a result, Hypothesis 2 is supported. Thus, it can be said that PD has a moderating effect in this relationship.

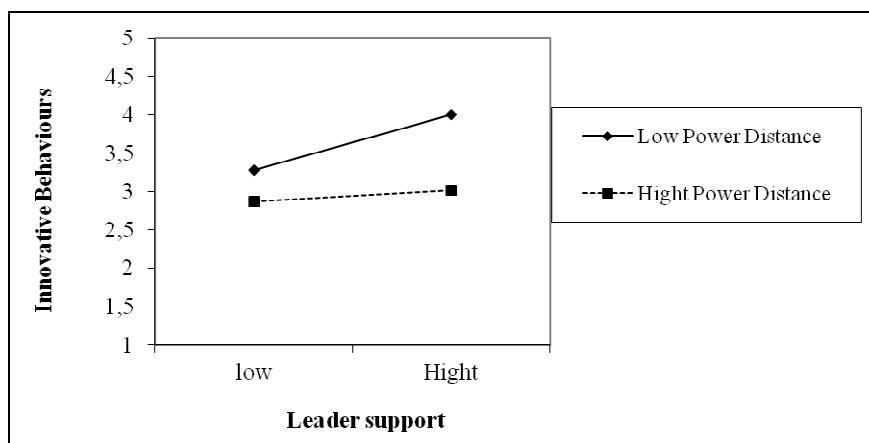


Fig. 2. The moderating role of power distance (Source: created by the author)

As shown in Figure 3, the relationship between LS and IB is significant when UA is high and low. It is observed that the relationship between LS and IB is stronger when UA is low. It is also determined that 41% of the variance of the model is represented by the exchange of LS and PD variables. Thus, it can be seen that Hypothesis 3 is supported and UA has a moderating role in this relationship.

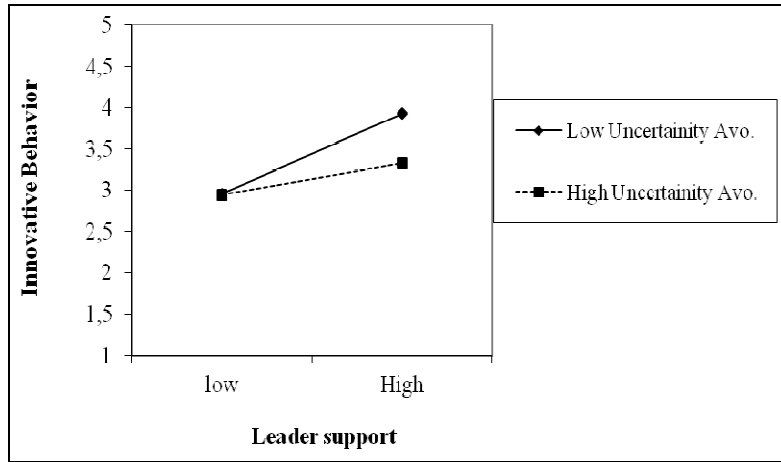


Fig. 3. The moderating role of uncertainty of avoidance (Source: created by the author)

As seen in Table 3, there is no moderating effect of COL and MAS in the relationship between LS and IB. Thus, Hypotheses 4 and 5 are not supported. In other words, COL and MAS do not have moderating effects in this relationship.

Conclusions

To increase the innovative behavior which is an indispensable factor for competitive power in businesses is the principal problematic of this research. Improving innovative behavior is one of the critical problematic areas for organizations. Service sector grows incredibly rapidly day by day. So, customer expectations vary every passing day. Being proactive and fulfilling the requirements of today such as innovative behavior in this sector is not easy in today's circumstances.

Leader support is one of the main issues of service sector workers. It can affect worker behavior in the workplace. Employees get high performance when their expectations are satisfied by their business (Organ 1977).

In this study, the factors which can be influential in improving employees' innovative behavior are examined in tourism sector in Turkey.

The LS is an independent variable which can positively affect the improvement of the expected behaviors of employees. Hofstede's culture dimensions (collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and power distance) are the moderator variables of whose effects are examined between input (LS) and output variables (IB).

In this context, primarily the effects of leader support on IB are investigated. The results show that leader support has a positive, significant and also a strong effect on innovative behavior. This result is expected and it is compatible with some researchers' results (e.g. Amabile *et al.* 1996; Waldman, Atwater 1994; Keller 1992; Ramus 2001; Yosof 2009).

After this process, moderating analysis is conducted to determine whether there are moderating effects through the relationship between leader support and innovative behavior.

In this process, the moderating role of collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and power distance are investigated through the effects of LS on IB. As a result of the analysis, it is found that uncertainty avoidance and power distance have moderating effects in both low and high levels on the relationship between leader support and innovative behaviour. This finding is important for researchers because it is the first in this research area regarding this moderation effect.

As a result of the analysis, it is also found that collectivism and masculinity do not have moderating effects in the relationship between leader support and innovative behavior. These results are unexpected, so at least finding a moderating role of collectivism in that relationship is an expected finding in terms of literature and expectation. However, cultural differences are very important factors in these findings. They can vary from country to country and also from sector to sector. Because of that, all the results of this study are acceptable since they are tested hypothetically.

According to the results of this study, increasing the perception of leader support of the employees is one of the useful ways to improve the level of innovative behavior. Besides, providing a cultural atmosphere containing a low

level of uncertainty avoidance and a low level of power distance can be useful to increase the positive effect of leader support on employees' innovative behaviors.

This study has some limitations. The first one is the sample limitation. Because only the perceptions of employees in Turkish tourism sector are explored in this research. Secondly, this research can not be conducted in a longitudinal way.

Finally, it can be suggested that longitudinal research design can be employed in order to support generalization of the associations between the variables in this research. Moreover, using SEM to investigate these relationships and adding more data from different cultures for comparison may be considered as recommendations for future studies.

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