The article investigates if the relative importance of determinants of job satisfaction is influenced by cultural differences. The research evidence provided by a multinational data sample from more than 40 countries and 376,670 respondents from 207 different corporations shows that these influences are mostly not statistically significant so they become practically irrelevant for management practitioners. The interpretation of the findings focuses on two widespread assumptions about the role of individual and cultural values in the job satisfaction formation.

**Keywords:** job satisfaction, cross-cultural management, cultural values, individual values
Introduction

Managers are confronted with the challenges resulting from the increasing globalization. It is not a new but still prevailing megatrend resulting in an increasing number of multinational corporations: whereas in the beginning of the 1990's there were about 35,000 transnational corporations, this number increased to more than 100,000 only 20 years later. The exposure of these corporations to large cultural differences between the parent company and its subsidiaries comes with a number of challenges for the people management. Mostly, the extension of the business across national borders leads to the export of management practices from the parent company. Corporate values, compensation schemes, feedback systems, and trained management styles are predominantly driven by the cultural environment of the parent company. These practices, however, can collide with different norms, values, and beliefs in other cultures, which complicates management in an environment with high cultural diversity.

Surprisingly, very little research has been investigating cross-cultural differences in the determinants of job satisfaction, although value differences are a central concept in satisfaction research. Possibly this is due to the fact that research interest in job satisfaction had its peak in the 1970's and cross-cultural research gained momentum with an increasing awareness of the possibilities Hofstede's work opened up. However, looking at the importance of having satisfied employees for the prosperity of an organization and the increasing challenges managers are facing in multinational organizations, this gap in understanding is in need to be closed. Thus, the central question of this article is: Do cultural differences influence the relative importance of the determinants of job satisfaction?

---

Cross-Cultural Differences in the Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

A large number of scientific publications report work values and the structure of job satisfaction for a specific country\(^4\) or compare small country samples with each other\(^5\). However, the applicability of these studies for the identification of cultural influences is very limited. The differences in sample composition and the use of different research instruments diminish the comparability of the results. In their cross-cultural review on job satisfaction Judge and colleagues\(^6\) could not elaborate on systematic cultural differences in the antecedent structure based on reliable comparative studies. They only argued based on findings of single country studies that there would be some evidence that differences in the structure of job satisfaction exist between countries and that more research would be needed in this area. Elizur and colleagues\(^7\) similarly stated that there would be very little comparative research about work values among different countries and their claim for more research has also not resulted in a significant increase in comparative studies in this field. This is extremely surprising since cross-cultural researchers frequently underline the relevance of culture for individual value systems. A large body of cross-cultural management literature is consistently stressing the point that culture is a decisive factor when managing and motivating a culturally diverse workforce.


Some studies compared the determinants of job satisfaction among different European countries. Six and Felfe\textsuperscript{8} analyzed the determinants of job satisfaction in a regression analysis using data of the Eurobarometer. They found rather consistent structures among their sample of European countries indicating a generally high importance of the job content, the relationship with management, and perceived stress at work with only marginal differences between the single countries. This result was also confirmed by another study among 11 European countries which found the ratings of different job characteristics (e.g. earnings, job security, type of work, hours of work etc.) ranking fairly similar in their importance for job satisfaction\textsuperscript{9}.

Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza\textsuperscript{10} investigated the antecedent structure of job satisfaction using the data of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) of the years 1989 and 1997 which had a focus on work orientations. Based on the ratings of more than 15,000 respondents from 21 countries, they analyzed the structure of job satisfaction in a regression approach. Also here the authors found large similarities in their highly international sample: the contributions of 'having an interesting job' and 'good relations with management' were significant and high in all countries. The importance of having a well-paid job and good advancement opportunities was additionally important especially in the countries from Central Eastern Europe (Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia). Another interesting observation was that Japan had a very similar effect structure to the countries of the Anglo-Saxon cluster (the USA and the UK) and only differed in the importance of doing independent work, which was not significant for Japan and might have reflected a more collectivistic mindset of Japanese workers.

In summary, cross-cultural differences in work values and in the structure of job satisfaction have been found between countries. Depending on the way of measurement, these differences are larger in direct ratings and smaller in indirect ratings. Especially the comparative studies investigating the statistical relationship between different job characteristics and job satisfaction have largely found similar rankings of importance. However, none of these studies made the attempt of explaining the observed (albeit small) differences using the concept of culture. This is why in the next step some hypotheses about the influence of culture on the determinants of job satisfaction will be developed, which subsequently can be empirically tested.

\textsuperscript{9} C. Nicoletti, \textit{Differences in Job Dissatisfaction across Europe}, University of Essex, Colchester 2006.
The Influence of Social Equity on Job Satisfaction

Societies vary in the degree in which their members accept that status and power are distributed unequally and in the way these attributes are assigned to the members. The presence of hierarchies in organizational contexts and the way hierarchical differences are handled by their members could also prove to be relevant for job satisfaction. The perceived distance to the superior manifests itself in the preference of management or leadership styles. Leadership styles are often contrasted in the extent to which the leader establishes distance between themselves and their subordinates. Likert\textsuperscript{11} hereby distinguished the ‘exploitative’ (meaning authoritative) and the ‘participative’ leader. In countries which have equality as a central value, subordinate employees want to interact with their superiors on an equal footing and discuss and negotiate without regard of hierarchical positions. In these countries the participative leader is preferred by subordinates – the fact that has been acknowledged by Hofstede\textsuperscript{12}, who used the preference of the consultative leadership style as an indicator of low power distance. The fear of disagreeing with the supervisor was, however, a sign of high power distance. This apprehension is rooted in the large perceived distance between the leader and the subordinate. The GLOBE project also had a strong focus on cultural influences on leadership and showed in their large-scale study that participative practices are significantly negative correlated with the power distance practices dimension\textsuperscript{13}. This might be due to societal norms but also to preferences and expectations of subordinates. Another study based on a sample of 18 countries showed that participative leadership improved the profitability of teams in low power distance countries but it did not affect it in high power distance countries\textsuperscript{14}. This result was explained by a requirement of having a fit between the management style and national culture in order to have satisfied and motivated employees. Thus, the participative management style should lead to job satisfaction in a high equality culture whereas it might even lead to dissatisfaction in a low equality culture.

Hypothesis 1: The statistical relationship of job satisfaction and the participative leadership style is moderated by social equality (in the way that it increases with the degree of social equality).

The Influence of Achievement Orientation on Job Satisfaction

Countries differ in the extent to which personal achievement is regarded as a central value in the society. This aspect of culture indicates to which extent tough values such as competition and performance are socially rewarded. As mentioned in the earlier section, the GLOBE project covered this idea in its ‘performance orientation’ dimension and identified behavioral consequences. In performance oriented countries education and personal development, high performance targets, and direct communication is valued15. This is in line with the operationalization of Hofstede16 who used the wish for high earnings or the advancement to higher level jobs as an indicator for masculinity. Thus, it can be assumed that in countries where achievement orientation is of central value for the society, performance encouragement in an organization is of higher importance to the employees and thus more important for their job satisfaction. In countries where achievement orientation is, however, not that important, these aspects of work should not play a central role for the satisfaction level. This assumption has partly been supported by a correlation analysis which showed that the extent to which an employee felt supported in his or her personal development was more strongly correlated to job satisfaction in high performance oriented countries (according to GLOBE practices) compared to low performance oriented countries17. So it can be hypothesized that performance encouragement is more important to job satisfaction in high achievement countries than it is in low achievement ones.

Hypothesis 2: The statistical relationship of job satisfaction and performance encouragement is moderated by achievement orientation (in the way that it increases with the degree of achievement orientation).

---

Description of the Data

This work used raw data of a standardized workplace survey which investigated value preferences and their influence on job satisfaction by country. These data were collected by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), a globally active strategic management consulting firm between 2002 and 2011. In this survey, the respondents replied to 35 standardized items on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale anchored with 1 = “I disagree” and 5 = “I agree”. Of these 35 items, 32 measured evaluative judgments about certain aspects of the work situation with item contents such as ‘My manager is a good teacher/mentor to me’ or ‘The career opportunities here are attractive to me’. These items reflect the perceptions of individuals about different aspects of the job and non-objective descriptions of the actual work situation. Seven out of those 32 items were chosen to test the above hypotheses. The remaining three out of all 35 survey items covered an overall attitude towards the job: ‘I am proud to work for this company’, ‘Overall, I am satisfied with working here’ and ‘I would recommend this company to friends as a great place to work’. The original dataset was cleaned up by deleting aggregated data (for some companies the single responses in the data set were aggregated on e.g. a department level) and responses which did not allow allocating a respondent to a specific country (e.g. in cases where ‘South East Asia’ or ‘Benelux’ was given as the respondent’s country). After this procedure the survey covered 376,670 respondents from 207 different corporations.

As indicators for cultural differences the country scores of Hofstede\(^\text{18}\) and GLOBE\(^\text{19}\) were used, in the last case the bias corrected dataset. Initially, the respective dimensions of these two studies were intended to be combined in order to have one common scale for the two cultural dimensions: social equality and achievement orientation. However, as discussed before, although these studies show conceptual similarities in these dimensions, the empirical data showed rather a poor convergence. Thus, this work used the respective dimension of each cultural framework separately. Table 1 gives an overview of the cultural dimensions which were used in each of the main cultural orientations investigated in this work.

---


### Table 1. Applied Cultural Dimensions by Value Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value orientation</th>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Corresponding value dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Equality</td>
<td>Hofstede</td>
<td>‘power distance’ (reversed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GLOBE</td>
<td>‘power distance’ values (reversed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GLOBE</td>
<td>‘power distance’ practices (reversed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement orientation</td>
<td>Hofstede</td>
<td>‘masculinity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GLOBE</td>
<td>‘performance orientation’ values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GLOBE</td>
<td>‘performance orientation’ practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the authors’ own study.

### Survey Items Allocation to the Hypotheses

The testing of the two hypotheses in this work was done using the raw data of the BCG engagement survey which contained the original responses of the participants to each item. Therefore, for each of the hypotheses those items needed to be identified which were suitable to test the proposed mechanisms according to the hypotheses. The coding of each item comes from the original dataset.

Hypothesis 1 stated that the higher the society’s tendency towards equality, the higher should be the correlation of the participative leadership style with job satisfaction. This was tested using two variables.

v_13: At work, my opinions seem to count
v_31: My manager is open to receiving feedback from me

Participative leadership can have different forms but generally includes forms such as consultation and joint decision making; practices which characterize a very collaborative working style between supervisors and their subordinates. Such a working group is characterized by flat hierarchies and open communication between team members regardless of the hierarchical position. The two variables can be seen as indicators for this management style since they indicate to which extent the opinions of a subordinate matter (v_13) and to which extent upward communication is encouraged (v_31). Both items were supposed to mirror the extent to which an employee feels encouraged to act with her or his supervisor on an equal footing.

The second hypothesis dealt with the influence of a society’s achievement orientation on the structure of job satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 stated that performance encouragement in the workplace is more strongly related to job satisfaction the

---

higher the achievement orientation of a society. This was tested by using the responses to five items:

v_18: Poor individual performance is not tolerated in this company
v_19: At this company compensation is clearly tied to performance
v_20: The career opportunities here are attractive to me
v_24: I receive useful and timely feedback on my performance
v_25: I receive the help I need to learn and grow professionally

The first two items mirrored the degree to which a respondent perceived that performance is encouraged in the corporation. This aspect was assessed in two ways, once in a form of the strictness in which low performers are sanctioned (v_18) and in the other case in the way performance is positively rewarded, here in case of a compensation system that incentivizes high performers (v_19). The second aspect of performance encouragement focused on the career and personal development opportunities which are claimed to be of central value to people in performance oriented societies since status and recognition in these countries is achieved by personal success. Therefore, the other three variables indicated if a respondent sees the company as a good field for personal development now (v_24, v_25) and in future (v_20). Therefore, all these items were expected to have a higher association with job satisfaction in countries with high performance orientation compared to the countries with low performance orientation.

**Empirical Results**

**The Test for Cultural Influences on Differences in MD Scores**

The first step of the analysis is the comparison of the satisfied with the dissatisfied sample. Therefore, a t-test has been performed for all variables, in which the respective country sample had at least 30 respondents in each of the satisfied and the dissatisfied group. Since the majority of the respondents gave high satisfaction scores, this led to the tendency that the dissatisfied sample was relatively small in each country and the countries with a small overall sample size had often to be excluded in this step so that only 30 countries were eventually fulfilling the data requirements for this analysis. Subsequently, the relative mean difference (MD) was calculated for all variables which showed a significant t-test result. The MD values indicate how far the responses between the satisfied and the dissatisfied group were apart from each other on average in comparison to all other items in that country.
The next step of the analysis was supposed to give the first indication about the influence of culture on the value priorities which have been discussed before. The two hypotheses which the analysis is focused on, have formulated specific expectations about the way in which the value priorities are expected to vary between the countries. The cultural influence has been formulated along two major dimensions, which are, in short, equality and achievement. In order to compare if the mean difference varies between the countries depending on whether they score high or low on these dimensions, the countries have been dichotomized in high and low scoring cultural groups.

For each of the two cultural dimensions, three different scales have been used: the scale of Hofstede and both, the values dimension and the practices dimension of the GLOBE project. Thus, twelve dummy variables were introduced to indicate a high score or a low score in each dimension. Therefore, in the case of Hofstede and the GLOBE dimensions, the ten highest scoring countries were compared to the ten lowest scoring countries in each dimension. All other countries in the sample were not included in the analysis in order to create highly discriminative groups.

Subsequently, the culturally high scoring group was compared to the low scoring group in a t-test in order to find out if these groups differed significantly in the MD values which were calculated for the previous analysis. These results can be found in table 2. The table shows the seven items which are assumed to be related to the two basic value orientations. In the fourth column, the direction of the expected relationship is specified: a ‘+’ indicates a positive relationship between the cultural dimension and the strength of relationship between the situational variable and job satisfaction. Accordingly, the difference in MD should be positive since the MD between satisfied and dissatisfied respondents should be larger in the high scoring countries compared to the low scoring ones. Of the 21 t-tests, one has shown a significant group difference (marked by a star). Thus, the separated cultural groups mainly do not lead to significant differences in answering behavior. The bold values additionally indicate if this difference between the groups is in line with the direction specified by the two hypotheses.

A more detailed look at the significant value reveals interesting insights. V_25 indicates if a respondent perceives to receive the support to grow, which is expected to be positively related to achievement orientation. The negative value difference, in contrast, shows that in low achievement countries the responses of the satisfied and the dissatisfied sample differ more strongly than in high achievement countries. The GLOBE practices dimension of achievement orientation, therefore, predicted the MD of v_25 according to expectations.
Table 2. Differences in MD Values by Cultural Influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Var.</th>
<th>Hyp.</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Hofstede</th>
<th>GLOBE practices</th>
<th>GLOBE values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v_13</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Social Equality</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_31</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Social Equality</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_18</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_19</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−0.09</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_20</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_24</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>−0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_25</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = t-test significant on 0.05 level
Source: the authors’ own study.

The Test of the Cross-level Moderator Effect Using HLM

Whereas the analysis of the group mean difference is very intuitive and easily applied, it lacks statistical power since lots of variance is lost during the dichotomization of dummy variables. A more powerful method to test the hypotheses of this work is applying hierarchical linear models. These can directly test the significance of a cross-level interaction term as it is assumed here: A variable on the aggregate level (here: the country) influences the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable, both on the individual level.

The first step in the application of hierarchical linear models (HLM) was made in order to determine whether there is a significant variation in the slope between the countries, as both hypotheses describe a variation of the slope between a situational variable and job satisfaction influenced by culture. If this slope were calculated for each country separately, it would show most likely differing values, however, it could not be determined whether these differences are also significant. The comparison of differently specified HLM allows determining the significance of these differences.

For each of the seven variables, two bivariate models were calculated using the situational variables as an independent variable and job satisfaction as a dependent variable. The first one is the random intercept model (RIM) in which the slope between the situational variable and job satisfaction is held constant for all the countries and the other is the random coefficient model (RCM) which allows the regression coefficient, which indicates the slope between the two variables, to vary between the countries. Table 3 gives an overview of the predictive quality of the specified models. It shows the log Likelihood values for each of the models, which are an indicator of the goodness of fit. If this value is multiplied by −2 it represents the Deviance: thus, the smaller the value in the table the higher is the deviance of the model and the lower
is its predictive power. The next column shows the results of the log Likelihood ratio test when comparing the RIM model with the RCM model. The positive values of this test indicate that the RCM has the better model fit in all cases, which is not surprising since it allows for slope variation. However, the last column indicates that the RCM exceeds the qualities of the RIM with high significance, which indicates that the slope between the countries itself varies significantly.

### Table 3. Likelihood Ratio Test of Basic Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Var.</th>
<th>logLik RIM</th>
<th>logLik RCM</th>
<th>-2LL ratio</th>
<th>Sign.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v_13</td>
<td>-360309.6</td>
<td>-35606.0</td>
<td>1407.2</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_31</td>
<td>-354759.8</td>
<td>-354105.4</td>
<td>1308.8</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_18</td>
<td>-419637.2</td>
<td>-419186.2</td>
<td>902.0</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_19</td>
<td>-293755.3</td>
<td>-292591.8</td>
<td>2327.1</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_20</td>
<td>-355657.5</td>
<td>-354143.7</td>
<td>3027.6</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_24</td>
<td>-412341.4</td>
<td>-411527.1</td>
<td>1628.5</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_25</td>
<td>-374534.1</td>
<td>-373520.4</td>
<td>2027.3</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the authors’ own study.

A significant variation of the slope between the situational variables and job satisfaction means that the strength in which these different variables contribute to job satisfaction differs significantly between the countries. In the following step it was investigated if the two cultural orientations explain some of this variance. This was done by introducing a cultural variable to the RCM. Four of these cross-level interaction models (CIM) are calculated for each of the seven variables, testing the predictive quality of the dimensions of Hofstede and the ‘values’ and ‘practices’ dimension of the GLOBE project. In these models it is decisive if this cross-level interaction term becomes significant. The results can be found in table 4. The table is constructed similarly to table 3 indicating the relative MD values by the variable showing the results for each variable ordered by the hypothesis and cultural dimension to be tested.

The significant effect sizes in table 4 are flagged with a star if the significance is on 0.05-level and with two stars if it is even significant on 0.01-level. As it can be seen at first sight, most of the tested moderator effects are insignificant. Hereby, Hofstede’s dimensions did not show any significant cross-level interaction effect. The practices dimension of the GLOBE project showed 4 significant cross-level effects (all on 0.05-level). The values dimension of GLOBE showed none of the significant effects.
Table 4. Effect Size and Significance of Cross-level Interaction Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Var.</th>
<th>Hyp.</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Dir.</th>
<th>Hofstede</th>
<th>GLOBE practices</th>
<th>GLOBE values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v_13</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Social Equality</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0067</td>
<td>0.0631</td>
<td>-0.0441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_31</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Social Equality</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0037</td>
<td>0.0279</td>
<td>-0.0078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_18</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0125</td>
<td>0.0731</td>
<td>-0.0572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_19</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0071</td>
<td>0.0918*</td>
<td>-0.0219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_20</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0097</td>
<td>0.1001*</td>
<td>-0.0812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_24</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0117</td>
<td>0.1119*</td>
<td>-0.0877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v_25</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.0045</td>
<td>0.0980*</td>
<td>-0.0298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = significant on 0.05 level
Source: the authors’ own study.

Hypothesis 1 has no significant cross-level interaction effect. Hypothesis 2 has four correct predictions by the GLOBE dimension. These cases were investigated further in order to understand the order of magnitude in which these cross-level effects influence job satisfaction. Thus, for the four correctly predicted cross-level effects, the RCM, and CIM were calculated and set in relation to each other (table 5).

Table 5. Specified Cross-level Interaction Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>v_19 GLOBE practices</th>
<th>v_20 GLOBE practices</th>
<th>v_24 GLOBE practices</th>
<th>v_25 GLOBE practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RCM</td>
<td>CIM</td>
<td>RCM</td>
<td>CIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma ~ 2</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.620</td>
<td>0.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tau 00</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tau 11</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviance</td>
<td>572,858</td>
<td>572,855</td>
<td>697,560</td>
<td>697,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>226,305</td>
<td>226,305</td>
<td>295,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variances explained</td>
<td>Slope variance = 10.3%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the authors’ own study.

The share of the variance which is explained by the cross-level interaction has been calculated. As it can be seen from table 5, the cultural variables explained between 9.8% and 16.6% of the variance in the slope between the countries. The average of the
four models is 13% of the variance explanation. This means that the cross-level-interaction term, which is the product term introduced by the CIM model, explains on average less than one-eighth of the slope differences which exist between the countries.

A look at the Deviance values in table 5 also reveals that the CIM mostly shows a similar Deviance value to the RCM. This indicates that, although a significant cross-level interaction effect was included in the CIM, the predictive quality of the model has not significantly increased.

Discussion of the Empirical Results

The empirical results which have been described in the previous chapter have led to very mixed results. In the first step of the discussion, the empirical support for each of the hypotheses will be examined separately and an interpretation of the findings will be given before a more holistic interpretation of the overall results is made in the following section.

Hypothesis 1: Participative Leadership Style and Social Equality

The hypothesis found no empirical support; none of the cultural variables explained any of the cross-country differences of either of the variables. This has not been expected since the major assumption in this area was that management practices should follow the prevalent social values in order to provide the subordinates with the form of guidance they prefer. Apparently these social values play no role in the preference of a certain leadership style. As it can be seen from the MD value analysis, the two variables were positively related to job satisfaction in all the countries of the sample. The assumption that accepting upward feedback might even lead to negative job satisfaction due to the loss of face of the supervisor (e.g. in the case of China) has not been supported by the data. So it seems that although it is clear that in the Chinese society high power distance is a norm and Chinese employees tend to avoid open confrontation with superiors in meeting situations, the participative management style does not violate the psychological values of employees. A study by Chen and Tjosvold suggests that the participative style, although it might be practised

in a different way (e.g. by avoiding open confrontation), might be even valued as a special way of relationship building called guanxi. Also in other countries with a low tendency to social equality the aspect of being involved and consulted seems to be of similar importance than in high equality countries. It might provide the feeling of being appreciated, valued and needed to employees in all countries in a similar manner, which seems to address a universal human need. Apparently, in this field of organizational practices, social norms and values differ from those aspects which are individually important for the level of satisfaction at work.

Hypothesis 2: Performance Encouragement and Achievement Orientation

The empirical results have been mixed. The relationship of v_18 to job satisfaction has not been moderated by any of the four cultural dimensions in question. This means that the influence of the presence of working sanctioning systems for low-performers on job satisfaction does not depend on the achievement orientation of a country. Therefore, it still seems to make a difference whether good performance is rewarded or not. The presence of a compensation system which accounts for performance differences (v_19) is more strongly related to job satisfaction in highly achievement oriented countries than it is in lower achievement oriented countries.

The three indicators of performance encouragement showed a significant moderation by the performance orientation practices variable of the GLOBE project. Especially the significant result of v_25 with this dimension has been expected since it already showed a significant value in the MD analysis and this relationship was shown before based on the same dataset using a different methodology. With the more advanced HLM technique also v_20 and v_24 show a significant difference in country importance. Especially v_20 and v_25 have shown to be of highest importance in almost all of the countries, indicating a generally high importance of personal development opportunities for job satisfaction. However, it should be noted that the prominence of this aspect is most likely due to the construction of the sample: most employees work for large corporations and the career perspectives in such an organization might be one of the reasons why employees have chosen to work there. This is the reason why this work does not try to answer the question which aspects of work contribute in which strength to job satisfaction since the dataset is not representative for the countries and the results, therefore, cannot be generalized. However, since

---

all the country samples are of similar composition in this respect, the samples are comparable and the result suggests that personal development opportunities in high achievement orientation countries are even more decisive for job satisfaction than they are in countries of low achievement orientation.

The cross-level moderator effect has been significant with the exception of v_18 so that on empirical grounds the hypothesis has been supported by the data: the influence of performance encouragement in the workplace on job satisfaction is moderated by the degree of the society’s achievement orientation (as measured by GLOBE practices). However, as far as the importance of culture in the structure of job satisfaction is concerned, the significant moderator effects did not improve the predictive quality of the total models as it was the case for the variables discussed earlier.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

All four sets of cultural dimensions have generally failed to moderate the relationship of the perception of the job facet and job satisfaction in a consistent manner. A few significant moderator effects have been found, however the lack of consistency in the findings questions the true quality of the results: if the cultural aspect should have been a good moderator of the relationship under investigation, all the items of a hypothesis should have been supported in a similar way which has been mostly not the case.

Beyond the poor explanatory value of the cultural frameworks, this discussion also needs to address the second and maybe even more decisive observation of this work. In those cases in which a significant cross-level interaction term has been identified, the higher specified CIM showed a hardly improved deviance value. This implies that the slope variance might be a negligible factor in the area of job satisfaction after all. The implications of this observation should therefore be elaborated upon.

The cultural moderator effect has made two implicit assumptions in the same time, which both could be the reason why the results did not come up as expected. First, it was assumed that individual values are the true moderator in discussion (the first assumption) which are themselves influenced by cultural values (the second assumption). Both assumptions need to be investigated at this point.

**The Influence of Personal Values on the Structure of Job Satisfaction**

Personal values have been assumed to explain the contribution of different aspects of the job to job satisfaction. This assumption is derived from the Value-Percept model
of Locke\textsuperscript{24} and has been supported by researchers of work values who defined work values as those entities (objects, behaviors, or situations) on which an individual or a group places high worth or importance\textsuperscript{25}. What is important should therefore contribute to a greater extent to job satisfaction, either positively or negatively, than an unimportant aspect of work. Also the job characteristics model\textsuperscript{26} implicitly introduced the individual value importance when assuming that the different aspects of a job contribute differently to job satisfaction in dependence of the individual value on personal growth. In line with these assumptions, respondents can be directly asked for their work values (which is important) and for their level of satisfaction and the evaluation of each aspect of the job leading to an overall satisfaction judgment to which the different aspects contribute according to their espoused importance.

The above mentioned theories of job satisfaction assume that individuals arrive at their satisfaction judgment by reasoning about the advantages and disadvantages of the job situation. However, it could be also theorized that conscious processes are entirely uninvolved in the satisfaction judgment. One promising approach is the assumption that the evaluation of satisfaction is created in an entirely unconscious process which is based on an intuitionistic judgment, as opposed to conscious reasoning. The intuitionistic model of job satisfaction might provide a coherent set of explanations to the observations made. The crucial thought in such a model is that individuals have no introspection to intuitionistic processes and they therefore cannot provide a valid description of their work values (as long as they are understood as 'the desired' ones). This means that people would make a judgment about their satisfaction immediately at hand but if they were asked to explain why they were satisfied or dissatisfied at the workplace, they would not necessarily be able to give an adequate answer. However, when researchers ask for work values or reasons for the level of satisfaction, the respondents have usually no problems to provide a coherent reasoning. But there are good arguments to assume that such reasons are not necessarily accurate. An intuitionistic approach to job satisfaction can be based on the work of Haidt\textsuperscript{27}. He introduced an influential model of the human judgment process which exceeds purely rationalistic approaches of judgment formation in the case of moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is much more complex than simple attitude formation.


but some aspects of his intuitionist model might be helpful to develop an alternative view on the evaluation process of job satisfaction.

In the first step, this model assumes that a moral judgment is mostly based on intuition as opposed to reasoning. The major difference to reasoning is that the process in which the individual arrives at a certain result is entirely unconscious and happens ad hoc. This affective judgment is consequently made before any reasoning process has even had time to take place, since reasoning involves an effortful processing of information, which takes a certain amount of brain capacity and time. Since respondents of job satisfaction surveys usually do not have problems providing a spontaneous answer about their level of job satisfaction and do not have to carefully think about their answer, this seems to be a valid representation of the intuitive judgment formation.

The assumption that many judgments are primarily linked to intuition has also consequences for the validity of cognitive reasoning. The intuitionist model assumes reason to be a consequence of the judgment result rather than its antecedent, meaning that intuition determines reason mediated by the judgment result. Haidt called this process ‘post hoc reasoning’, since this process provides logical arguments in order to support the already made judgment and he compared it to a lawyer who argues in defense of a client as opposed to a judge seeking the truth. The motivation of this behavior can be understood by the wish to avoid behavioral inconsistencies and internal contradictions and with this cognitive dissonance. Consequently, rational explanations in support of the judgment are developed by individuals. Kunda argued that it is quite a frequent phenomenon that the reasoning of individuals is driven by the motivation to arrive at a certain conclusion and would therefore overemphasize information which is supportive in this respect. She summarized that there “is considerable evidence that people are more likely to arrive at conclusions that they want to arrive at”. Thus, everyday cognition seems to be not driven by pure logic to the extent in which it is mostly assumed, it appears in contrast to be strongly influenced by the motivation to preserve valuable and already made judgments. These judgments are mostly the result of processes individuals are unaware of, although they typically have an illusion that these have been formed in a state of controlled awareness.

---

Taking into account the above findings, a new model of job satisfaction needs to be developed in order to explain the nature of job satisfaction based on intuition which also needs to provide an explanation for the weak empirical results of the present study. A suggestion can be found in figure 1. It assumes, similarly to the model of Haidt, that job satisfaction is based on intuition (link 2) which itself is based on the experiences in the job (link 1). Intuition can be assumed being based on affect as a major heuristic in judgment formation. The post hoc reasoning is dependent on the result of the job satisfaction judgment (link 3). Also similarly to the model of Haidt it includes two feedback loops acknowledging the fact that satisfaction and intuition can in exceptional cases be influenced by reason. Number 4 is the reasoned judgment link which describes that an individual can revise a satisfaction statement by logical self-persuasion following a purely rationalist approach. Link 5 allows for a possibility of private reflection, which might lead to the activation of new intuitions, for example when a person is comparing his or her own job to other less or more favorable jobs, which in turn might lead to a revision of the previous intuition about job satisfaction. However, links 4 and 5 are believed to be exceptions rather than the rule.

Figure 1. The Intuitionist Model of Job Satisfaction

![Diagram of the Intuitionist Model of Job Satisfaction]


The revised model of job satisfaction also includes a hypothesis about the influence of personal and cultural values. It is the values as the personally desired ones which

---

determine the level of job satisfaction. This is the explanation why two respondents in exactly the same job situation might respond with differing satisfaction levels: for one employee this situation might be corresponding to what he values or desires (e.g. a good atmosphere) but for the other one there might be a lack of what is personally valued (e.g. good advancement opportunities). This influence is indicated by link 6, which hypothesizes a moderating effect of personal values on the relationship between aspects of job situation and the intuition about satisfaction. Also link 7 persists based on the earlier made reasoning that cultural influences might influence what is personally desired. The main difference to the initially proposed model is that this influence happens in the unconscious process of intuition formation which is not accessible by an individual.

The intuitionist model of job satisfaction seems to provide good explanations to some of the observations made in the area of job satisfaction. First of all, it is able to explain why individuals may respond effortlessly and spontaneously to a survey item investigating job satisfaction. Since the judgment is not based on an effortful process of cognitive reasoning, a satisfaction judgment is available ad-hoc. It is possible that an individual might therefore use affect as a heuristic, since job satisfaction has been shown that a satisfaction statement has certain affective qualities.

It is also able to explain why espoused values often differ from values in use. A very good example to illustrate this point is the Two-Factor theory of job satisfaction. This theory was based on the narration of respondents who were supposed to recall situations in which they were particularly satisfied or dissatisfied and subsequently describe what might have been the cause of this feeling. The intuitionist model would assume that the satisfaction statement was based on an affect which might have been positive or negative when recalling the respective situation. The request to give an explanation to the satisfaction level put the respondents in an awkward situation, since they would have to provide explanations about something they do not have a detailed knowledge of. Consequently, the respondents fell back on a priori causal models why people are satisfied or dissatisfied at the job situation and look for supportive arguments in order to defend the intuitional judgment of satisfaction. Therefore, the provided arguments do not have to be necessarily wrong, however, they certainly have the character of imprecise ‘anecdotal evidence’ for the judgment rather than being a thorough analysis based on introspection. In case of the Two-Factor theory,

the respondents provided a typical response pattern by blaming situational factors for dissatisfaction and giving intrinsic motivators as the reason for satisfaction. This flattering result for an individual can be explained by motivated reasoning, meaning the respondents delivered the arguments which do not only support the already made result but also account for the need of having a positive self-concept\(^\text{35}\).

The intuitionist model provides an explanation why espoused work values, meaning statements about what an individual thinks is important or desirable at work, do not necessarily need to correspond with the psychological determinants of job satisfaction. The assumption that job satisfaction is based on intuition has further implications about the validity of the established cultural frameworks, which will be discussed in the next section.

### The Relationship of Cultural Values and Individual Values

The revised intuitionist model hypothesized that cultural values can have an influence on individual value preferences (link 7 in Figure 1). However, research evidence of this work as well as occasional previous research, which will be discussed in this section, suggests that this influence might be in fact small.

Evidence for the hypothesis that cultural values hardly capture what the individuals of a culture actually desire can be found in the scientific literature slightly off the beaten track. A very interesting perspective is provided by behavioral studies, which analyze the motivations of human behavior in experiments in psychological laboratories. A study of Yamagishi\(^\text{36}\) provided valuable insights in this respect. In an experiment, participants from the USA and Japan were playing a prisoner's dilemma game. The players could either cooperate by contributing money with the risk of being exploited by the other participants if these did not contribute, or they could choose to defect by not contributing money themselves and exploit the other players this way. The assumption had been that players from the highly individualistic US culture would show a tendency to maximize individual value by defecting from the group, whereas the more collectivistic Japanese participants would show a higher degree of cooperation because these behaviors reflect their cultural and thus also their personal preferences. However, the opposite proved to be true. The Japanese participants cooperated in 44.4% of the cases whereas those from the US cooperated in 56.2% of

---


the cases. In a variation of this game the participants could introduce a sanctioning system in order to punish a potential defector. When this form of sanctioning was in place, the participants showed a similar rate of cooperation being 74.6% for the Japanese and 75.5% for US participants. This finding is particularly interesting since it could be interpreted in the way that the degree of collectivism is not anchored in individual value systems of people and thus influences the behavior in the first place. The author argued that the Japanese act socially in a collectivist manner since collectivist behavior is a cultural norm in the society. This assumption was confirmed in another experiment in which it was shown that the Japanese prefer equal reward allocation less than their US counterparts, although the American culture is believed to be meritocratic to a much higher degree than the Japanese one. And in fact it seems to be the case that cultural values do not play any role in the artificial situation of anonymous lab experiments. A meta-analysis which compared the results of participants from multiple countries playing another behavioral game, the ultimatum game, also failed to explain the observed country differences in behavior using the cultural dimensions of Hofstede.

The results of the behavioral studies suggest that individuals act according to social norms and ideas out of self-interest - either by expecting rewards, the reciprocity of favors, or by avoiding sanctions. This consequently means that the cultural dimensions for example of Hofstede are able to explain the differences in observed behavior but they most likely do not map the differences in individual value systems as a consequence of cultural influences. Otherwise these behavioral tendencies would have shown their validity in the behavioral experiments in which many forms of social influence were reduced. However, the assumption of an independent system of cultural norms and values does violate the broad consensus of value researchers. These believe that individual values are a product of the social system, received during socialization and therefore strongly affected by social values. And these researchers would obviously object to the implications of the intuitionist model that systematic differences in the responses to questions about the personally desired values have been successfully identified among countries. If the consequence of the intuitionist model were to be true – assuming that individuals have no access to their personal value systems and fall back on general descriptions of ‘anecdotal evidence’ – there

---

should be no consistent observable differences among countries and cultures. And indeed, although replications of the most cross-cultural studies often show weak results, some of these findings have been replicated suggesting that the reported country differences are unlikely to be random.

A potential explanation for these systematic response differences can be found for example in cultural influences on individual response behavior. Cultural influences on behavioral norms and thus resulting behavior have been frequently observed as it has been discussed earlier. Responding to a value survey is also nothing else but a specific form of behavior in which social definitions about what is generally regarded as good or important will show effect to a certain extent. Culture generally influences communication behavior resulting in different communication styles. But more importantly, the aspect of social desirability provides an extremely content related influence on survey responses. The social definition of what is good or desirable influences the direct communication of a respondent to a certain extent and thus might be one causal influence of the observed patterns40.

Whereas the just described form of social influence occurs in the step of communication, it can also be assumed that cultural influences apply at an earlier point during the formation of cognitive justification. In a special case of value surveys, the intuitionist model assumes that individuals have no conscious access to the importance of a personal value system in the level of detail it is usually requested. In order to provide an answer to the survey questions as requested they have to fall back on existing a priori models41. These a priori models might be to a large extent framed by the social environment and reflect socially acceptable or desirable reasons for satisfaction. This way, a respondent is likely to consider the social frame of reference when trying to justify the formed judgment.

Both forms of cultural influence, the influence on judgment formation as well as on communication behavior, are able to consistently coin a cultural pattern in the value statements which are made by individuals and can therefore be understood as a major cause of cultural differences in the communication of espoused values. This is the reason why Hofstede was able to identify cultural dimensions among a set of reported individual value priorities. As it was discussed in the description of the intuitionist model, the fact that individuals have no true introspection to their value


systems as ‘the desired’ ones does not mean that these value dimensions are necessarily unrelated to what people actually desire. Some valid moderator effects have been explained by the dimensions of the GLOBE project, which could be seen as an indicator that ‘the desired’ and ‘the desirable’ overlap to a certain extent. However, the fact that each single dimension mostly did not show the expected moderator effect suggests that this overlap is rather small.

Conclusion

The puzzling fact that the assumed differences have not been empirically verified has led to a chain of reasoning starting from the newly developed intuitional model of job satisfaction which is contradictory to most of the established models in the area of job satisfaction:

1. The job satisfaction statement of an individual is assumed to be based on intuition which uses affect as a major heuristic in judgment formation.
2. Intuitional processes are not consciously accessible by an individual, which also means that the individual has no true introspection into the own determinants of satisfaction.
3. Individuals whose determinants of satisfaction are investigated, cannot provide valid answers. They have to deliver ‘anecdotal evidence’ instead, resulting in espoused values.
4. Espoused values differ in many ways from values ‘in use’ and are subject to cultural influences.
5. Most cultural frameworks have built their respective dimensions on espoused values and therefore identified elements of social influences which were falsely assumed being indicative of what individuals in the culture personally desire.

References


