Impact of individual characteristics and cultural values on citizenship and task performance: experience of non-academic employees of universities

Anil Chandrakumara
University of Wollongong, anilc@uow.edu.au

Subashimi Senevirathne
University of Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka

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Abstract
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Keywords
impact, characteristics, individual, cultural, values, citizenship, task, performance, experience, non, academic, employees, universities

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of individual characteristics and cultural values on citizenship and task performance (CTP) of non-academic staff members of Sri Lankan universities. Literature review provides conceptual support for the proposed links between individual characteristics, cultural values, and CTP. Survey strategy was adopted and a questionnaire was distributed among 125 employees of five universities. Analysis was based on 72 usable returned questionnaires. ANOVA, correlation and regression analyses were performed in order to examine the proposed impact. The findings indicate that the respondents’ main cultural value orientations represent uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and future orientation and that the levels of task performance and citizenship performance are good and moderate respectively. The impact analysis indicates that gender, future orientation, and power distance variables influence one aspects of CTP- citizenship performance towards interpersonal relationships. Implications of findings are discussed. Overall, the study provides a significant contribution to the predisposition and individual attributes theories of citizenship and task performance.

Introduction

There has been a continuing interest in the study of the impact of national culture values on organizational variables in the context of
different countries (see for example, Gerhart, 2008; Kirkman, 2006). In line with this research agenda, examining differences in the level of extra-role behaviour or citizenship performance (CP) across cultures has been an important topic for both researchers and practitioners (e.g. Organ and Yeon Lee, 2008, Fischer et al., 2005). Human resource values and capabilities that are embedded in cultural and work values could be considered as sources that create competitive advantages (Paine and Organ, 2000). This is an increasingly critical attribute in these days of heightened competition in the global market place (Tierney et al., 2002; Kidder, 2002). Researchers have also stressed the need for studies in the context of developing countries because of the fact that cultural values orientations in developing countries are different from those of developed countries (Nyambegera et al., 2000, Sparrow and Budhwar, 1998, Chandrakumara and Sparrow, 2004). Sri Lanka is a developing country in the South Asia with 19 million people. Sri Lanka today is South Asia’s most opened economy and therefore known as ‘the Gateway to South Asia’ by many investors. Sri Lankan society and culture has been influenced by traditional Indian civilization and cultural phenomenon, colonial heritages, and development policies and strategies of post-independence governments (Nanayakkara, 1993). The cultural patterns of the society are, therefore, intricately made up of components, which intermesh with the affect of each other. However, it has been observed that Sri Lankan management practices evolved from the British system prior to its political independence and adopted mostly similar Western practices, predominantly American methods of management, in their business activities since independence (Nanayakkara, 1993). Joiner (2001) notes that progressive firms in developing countries tend to mimic the practices of successful organizations from more industrialized nations, without reference to surrounding societal values. Joiner further notes that the implementation of such cultural changes may jeopardize the success of that change. Reflecting these realities, some researchers and national organizations in Sri Lanka have stressed the importance of exploring cultural and work values orientations of employees and then modifying HR practices and work ethics and values in order to overcome HR outcomes issues such as low commitment, low productivity, lack of corporation and trust etc.
that prevail in many organizations (e.g. Chandrakumara, 2007, Nanayakkara, 1993; Vishnath, 1997).

Do Sri Lankan employees have appropriate cultural values, which can be considered as human resources values and capabilities? Do their behaviours at work and performance reflect the adoption of their values and capabilities? What existing empirical research evidence indicates in Sri Lankan context is that lack of cooperation and trust, conflict and poor relationship between management and employees, and low commitment and productivity in many private and public sector organizations in Sri Lanka (e.g. Vishnath, 1997, Nanayakkara, 1993). In the management literature, the behaviours associated with commitment, cooperation, trust, extra-role behaviour generally refers to citizenship or contextual performance (see Borman and Motowidlo, 1997 for a review). It represents work behaviour that is discretionary and not directly linked to an organisation's rewards system (Organ, 1997). There is also considerable evidence to indicate that CP is beneficial and has positive influence on organizational performance (e.g. Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). The behaviour attached to task performance (TP) is generally included in the job descriptions and reward systems of organizations. As far as Sri Lankan universities are concerned, there has been a common charge that the contribution to the nations' development is substandard. The nature and the degree of contribution are highly dependent on the performance of academic and non academic staff. Although there has been some empirical research evidence relevant to performance of academic staff (e.g. Chandrakumara, 2002), there is a dearth of empirical research with regard to understanding citizenship and task performance (CTP) of non academic employees. One of the questions we raise in this study is:

What is the level of citizenship and task performance of non-academic employees of Sri Lankan universities?

It is evident that cultural work values are important constructs for understanding and predicting behavior and performance of individuals at work. In the recent literature on industrial and organizational psychology, researchers have argued that any
theoretical framework for understanding cultural work values in an organizational context needs to adapt a comprehensive view of their effect on behaviour (Sparrow, 2001; Sagie et al., 1996). In assessing the impact of cultural values, Sparrow (2001) emphasizes the need to incorporate elements of organizational citizenship behaviour to reflect mental, emotional and attitudinal states and salient organizational behaviours. This is because values, as an important element of culture, can be seen as an important determinant of CP. Indeed, Paine and Organ (2000) note that the cultural context itself may encourage or dissuade organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and that national culture might influence those conditions that relate to OCB. For example, they stress that cultural group norms may encourage employees to help each other whenever necessary and that personal predispositions to cooperate are influenced by values absorbed from the wider culture and carried in the minds of individuals. There is abundant evidence to indicate that cultural work values are of major significance to individuals’ performance in industrial societies (e.g. MOW, 1987; Ruíz-Quintanilla and England, 1996). Accordingly, the third research issue we raise in this study is:

*Do cultural value orientations of non academic employee influence their citizenship and task performance?*

With regard to other determinants of CP, research by Motowidlow and colleagues (Motowidlow, Borman, & Schmit, 1997, Borman at al., 2001) suggests that different individual characteristics affect CTP. For example, Borman at al., (2001) indicate that variables such as locus of control, collectivism, personal initiative are related to CTP (meta-analysis of dispositional correlates). There is clearly a strong motivational or predisposition component to an employee’s desire to perform his or her job ‘above and beyond’ the stated job requirements (Organ and Ryan, 1995, Werner, 2000). Podsakoff et al., (2000) also highlighted the theoretical significance of identifying determinants of individual differences of CTP. Podsakoff et al., (2000) in their review article, note that there is a lack of research evidence, which they noted as somewhat of a surprise, to indicate the impact of such demographic variables as gender and tenure on
organizational citizenship behaviour. In this context, the second research issue we raise is that:

**Do individual difference variables of employees affect their levels of CTP?**

This study intends to contribute to both theory and practice of managing employees and their performance in different cultural context. Theoretically, Werner (2000) notes that behavioural patterns embedded in ideas about citizenship behaviour have many important theoretical and practical implications for virtually all kinds of human resource practices, including job analysis, recruitment, selection, training, development, performance appraisal, compensation, and even labour and employee relations. Thus, the study will have implications for the theories of application of cultural values and predisposition and individual attributes theories of CTP. Practically, the findings and suggestions of this study would be useful for Sri Lankan university administrators and policy decision makers in order to improve CTP of non academic employees.

**Literature Review**

**Citizenship and Task Performance**

Citizenship performance is defined as “individual efforts that are not directly related to their main task functions but are important because they shape the organisational, social, and psychological context that serve as the catalyst for task activities and processes” (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993: 71). After considering some conceptual similarities and differences in the definitions of ‘organisational CP’ and ‘contextual performance’ Organ (1997) redefined OCB in essentially the same way (Motowidlo, 2000) that Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined contextual performance, “as contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of the social and psychological context that supports TP” (Organ, 1997:91). He then hypothesized that organisational members' view of TP: (1) as a more enforceable job requirement, and (2) as more likely to lead to
systematic rewards than OCB. With this redefinition, OCB means the same thing as contextual performance (Motowidlo, 2000).

Task performance (TP) refers to prescribed behaviour that is directly related to the achievement of organisational goals, for example, keeping accounts, serving customers, managing a work unit etc. (Allworth & Hesketh, 1999). In the current work psychology literature, TP is defined as 'the proficiency with which incumbents performed activities that are formally recognised as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to an organisation’s technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services' (Borman, and Motowidlo, 1993:73). TP dimensions are typically explicit in an individual employee's job description. However, as Schmidt (1993) points out with changing jobs, a job description may not provide solid ground for defining TP. TP seems to be best predicted by measures of ability, knowledge, skills and job experience, while CP is best predicted by personality-related measures (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). However, experienced supervisors weigh task and contextual performance equally when appraising performance (Borman et al., 1995: Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). MacKenzie et al., (1991) found a positive correlation between citizenship dimensions and traditional measures of performance. Werner (1994) also found that when task performance was low, a high level of helping behaviours and extra effort were not influenced by supervisory ratings.

**Relationships between Cultural Values and Citizenship and Task Performance**

The cultural value orientation of employees in the proposed study is considered at the individual level and as a dispositional and cultural psychological variable. Motowidlo at al., (1997) proposed a theory of individual differences in CTP. Borman at al., (2001) reviewed this theory and meta-analysis of dispositional correlates of organisational CP to examine the link between personality predictors and CP. They indicate that personality; at least conscientiousness and dependability construct correlates more highly with CP than with TP. They further indicate that variables such locus of control, collectivism, personal initiative are related to citizenship behaviour.
Empirically, Motowidlo and Van Scotter’s (1994) study had data relevant to the point that personality constructs and other predisposition variables are good predictors of CTP. In general correlation between these scales and the contextual performance ratings are higher than those with TP ratings. Smith et al., (1983) also suggested that environmental or individual attributes may directly or indirectly affect citizenship behaviour. Referring to the ‘altruism’ value, Krebs (1970) suggested that social norms of cooperation, helping and sensitivity to others’ need or a collective sense of social responsibility possibly affect CP. Further, Zuckerman (1975) and Lerner and Miller (1978) suggested that the existence of a stable dimension of individual differences concerning ‘belief in a just world’ (with states that people have a need to believe that their environment is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve) is more likely to exhibit pro-social behaviour. Additionally, there is clearly a strong motivational or predisposition component to an employee’s desire to perform his or her job ‘above and beyond’ the stated job requirements (Organ and Ryan, 1995, Werner, 2000), and formal training efforts are less likely to be effective when employee motivation is low (Wexley and Latham, 1991). According to Rokeach (1973), one of the immediate functions of values and value systems is to understand human behaviour because values have a strong motivational component as well as cognitive, affective, and behavioural components. In relation to the direct impact of values on other related behavioural concepts, England and Lee (1974) distinguished successful managers from unsuccessful managers based on individual value patterns. Personal values also play a role in the choice of careers (Costa, McRea, & Holland, 1984), ethical behaviour in the workplace (Finegan, 1994), job satisfaction (Mottaz, 1986), commitment (Oliver, 1990), and job involvement (Nyambegera, et al., 2001). Research by Motowidlow and colleagues (Motowidlow, Borman, & Schmit, 1997; Motowidlow & Van Scotter, 1994) suggests that different individual characteristics affect CTP.

With regard to the relationship between cultural values and CTP, Sparrow (2000) emphasizes the need to incorporate elements of organizational citizenship behaviour in assessing mental, emotional
and attitudinal states and salient organizational behaviour. This is because values, as an important element of culture, can be seen as an important determinant of CP. Paine and Organ (2000) also note that the cultural context itself may encourage or dissuade organizational citizenship behaviour and that national culture might influence those conditions that relate to OCB. For example, they stress that cultural group norms may encourage employees to help each other whenever necessary and personal predispositions to cooperate are influenced by values absorbed from the wider culture and carried in the minds of individuals. Shapira and Griffith (1990) also found that the work values of managers and engineers were strongly related to their performance rating, and more weakly and inversely related to their tardiness levels. With regard to production and clerical staff, moderate correlations were obtained for both factors. What all this evidence strongly suggests is that the theoretical and empirical possibility of exploring relationships between such predisposition variables and CTP.

Methodology

The research is based on survey strategy. Ganesh (1990) also notes that almost 80 percent of studies on values in the organisational context are based on questionnaire surveys. The main research question addressed in the study can be considered as a common issue relevant to many organizations. The required type of analysis is correlational and therefore a more structured type of response format is desired. Therefore, survey strategy was adopted as it facilitates to generate mainly quantitative data from relatively a large sample by way of distributing questionnaires.

Indicators and Measures:

Employees' values orientations will be evaluated by using the following dimensions presented by Hofstede (1980 and Hofstede and Bond (1988). They are Individualism and Collectivism, Past, Present, and Future Orientation, Masculine and Femininity, and Power Distance. Although culture has been conceived of at societal level, Dorfman and Howell (1988) determined to exit, and found to be measurable, at individual level. These dimensions have been widely used to measure cultural value orientations of employees.
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and therefore can be considered as a realizable and valid scale for measuring the main study variables. Individual characteristics will be measured by using demographic characteristics such as gender, education level, employment category, experience etc. In order to measure contextual performance, a 16-item measure developed by Smith et al.'s., (1983) is used. A ten-item task performance measure is developed by selecting eight items from the scale developed by Goodman and Suyantek (1999) and using two self-developed items. This scale was selected because it could be used in common for all categories of employment in the sample and also because its scale items are comparable with some other measures of and empirical research in task performance (e.g., Vayne, Shore, Liden, 1997; Bishop, Scott, and Burroughts, 2000).

**Sampling and Data Collection**

Literature review reveals that not only work values orientations but also behavioural and performance outcomes may vary according to the category of employment (e.g., Shapira & Griffith, 1990). In order to address these issues the sample was included middle level executives, professionals, first line executives, skilled and technical employees, manual, and clerical employees. The Disproportionate Stratified Random Sampling method was used to select respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure different categories of employees were included in the sample and the disproportionate sampling decisions are made either when some stratum or strata are too small or too large (Sekaran, 2000). Accordingly 125 respondents were selected from four Sri Lankan universities; namely, University of Visual and Performing Arts, University of Colombo, University of Moratuwa, and University of Sri Jayewardenepura.
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* Gender 2 = Male, Age 2=31-45 group, Education 3 = Advanced Level, Job cat. 4 = Clerical, Tenure 2 =1-5 Years category. **Correlation is significant at 0.001 Level; * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level;
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<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gender 2 = Male, Age 2=31-45 group, Education 3 = Advanced Level, Job cat. 4 = Clerical, Tenure 2 =1-5 Years category.
**Correlation is significant at 0.001 Level; * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level;
Results

The analysis is based on 72 usable responses. The effective response rate of the survey is 58% which seems to be satisfactory in the context of developing country. The impact of independent variable on dependent variable is examined using, correlation, ANOVA, and regression analysis.

Table 2 indicates that majority of respondents are male (53%), have advanced level education (43%), employed in clerical grades (36%), and have gained 1-5 years of experience (26%). It also reveals that respondents' orientations towards uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and future orientations are relatively higher than their orientations towards past and present, masculinity and power distance. The initial analysis also indicates that respondents TP is good (Mean 4.8, SD 0.81) but their orientation towards citizenship performance towards task (CPTT), one aspect of CP, is not satisfactory (Mean 2.8, SD 1.19). It tends to show that respondents mostly engage in performing task and duties which are specified in their job descriptions and formal letters, but not volunteered towards performing additional task relevant to their jobs or the organization. It also indicates that respondents tend to be volunteered towards developing interpersonal relations than involving in task related activities.

One of the main objectives of the study was to examine the impact of individual characteristics on CTP. The results indicate that, contextual performance towards interpersonal relationship (CPTIR) has a significant relationship with gender. Further analysis with of contextual performance data (ANOVA) also indicated that female employees tend to be more oriented towards developing interpersonal relationships with others than male employees. Similarly, job category has significant negative relationships with TP, which indicates that the higher the job category, the lower the TP. Overall results presented in Table-2 indicate that one aspect of CTP, that is CPTIR, is influenced by cultural values and individual characteristics. Among the individual characteristics, gender is the
Table 2: Results of Regression Analysis
Individual Characteristics, Cultural Values and Citizenship and Task Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>-.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<td>.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.17*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future orientation</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Past/Present Orientation</td>
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<td>-.13</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.18</td>
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<td>-.25</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectivism/Individualism</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td>Masculinity</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
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<td>-.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
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<td>.039</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes - Significant Beta is shown as P<.05*, P<.01**. Dependent variables 1, 2, 3, and 4 are CPTIR, CPTO, CPIT, and Task Performance.
only variable found significantly influence the CPTIR (Beta -0.23; p<.05). With regard to cultural values, power distance (Beta -0.29; p<0.05) and future orientation (Beta 0.34; P< 0.05) have an impact on CPTIR, indicating that the higher power distance, the lower the orientation towards developing interpersonal relationships in the organisations. Similarly, when employees are oriented towards future, rather than present and past, they tend to engage in activities associated with CPTIR.

Discussion

The major objectives of this study were to assess the level of eTP of non-academic members of Sri Lankan universities and examine impact of individual characteristics and cultural values on CTP. The evidence shows that one individual characteristic, gender, and two cultural value orientations, power distance and future orientations, significantly influence CPTIR. It was found that female employees' involvement in CPTIR is higher than that of male employees. Podsakoff et al., (2000) in their review article, note that there is a lack of research evidence, which they noted as somewhat of a surprise, to indicate the impact of such demographic variables as gender and tenure on organizational citizenship behaviour. Although it was not a large sample, the evidence of this study fills this knowledge gap to some extent. In the recent past, some other researchers have stressed the need for identifying determinants of individual differences of cultural values in CP (e.g. Borman et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2000). The findings of this study revealed that power distance and future orientations values are important in determining CPTIR. It reveals that CPTIR can be improved by cultivating future oriented values and maintaining low power gaps between different categories of jobs in the hierarchy of and organizations. Hackman and Walton (1986) note that individuals with a strong need for growth should respond eagerly and positively to the opportunities provided by enriched work. With regard to the relative impact of cultural values and individual characteristics on TP, the study found that TP is not significantly influenced by any of these variables. This evidence seems to have some relevance to Hunt's (2002) contention that organizational citizenship behaviour...
is likely to have less relevance to 'Tailorist's jobs'. Finally, as Paine and Organ (2000) stressed, unique human resource values such as future orientations and low power distance could be considered as sources that create competitive advantages. Although, the findings of this study provides some evidence with regard to the impact of gender and cultural values on CTP, more studies with representative samples from different sectors of an economy are required to determine the nature of impact of other individual characteristics and cultural values on CTP.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The major objective of this study was to examine the impact of cultural values on CTP in the context of Sri Lankan non-academic employees. Survey strategy was adapted and the analysis was based on 72 responses. The results revealed that the level TP was good and that of CP was satisfactory. Further, the respondents' main cultural values were oriented towards university avoidance, future orientation, and collectivism values. The study found that gender, power distance and future orientation values have significant impact on CPTIR. Other individual characteristics such as age, education, employment category, and tenure were not found significant in influencing CTP. Similarly, cultural values of individualism/collectivism, masculinity, present/past orientation, and uncertainty avoidance were found to be not significant in determining CTP. However, due to the limitation of study in terms of sample size, the results cannot be generalized. Therefore, more future studies are required form different country, culture, and industry context and from larger sample. With regard to practical implications, it seems appropriate for encouraging and motivating employees to be more future oriented and taking actions to reduce power gaps between hierarchical structures of Sri Lankan universities in order to improve CP of non-academic employees. Theoretically, Borman et al., (2001) and Podsakoff et al., (2000) stressed the need for identifying determinants of individual differences in CTP in relation to culture-related work values. By providing some important empirical evidence towards this end, the study as a whole provides a significant contribution to the predisposition and individual attributes theories of CTP.
References


