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The Relationship between Work Culture and Work Behaviours: a Cross-cultural Study

SUMMARY

The paper presents an analysis of the research into the influence of culture differences on behaviour at work and the interactions between attitudes and behaviours at work on the example of Turkey and Poland. In order to examine this problem a model of work culture was developed. The study involved altogether 583 production workers. The results indicated a strong relationship between work culture and attitudes at work (e.g. the significance of work for the worker, engagement, self-discipline, effort invested in work) as well as behaviours at work (e.g. effectiveness, competence, absence, sick leaves).

→ **KEYWORDS –** CULTURE, WORK, CULTURE

STRESZCZENIE

Związek między kulturą pracy a zachowaniami w pracy: badania międzykulturowe

Artykuł przedstawia analizę wyników badań dotyczących różnic kulturowych w zachowaniu w pracy oraz interakcji pomiędzy postawami i zachowaniami w pracy na przykładzie Turcji i Polski. W celu zbadania powyższej kwestii utworzony został model kultury pacy. W badaniach wzięło udział łącznie 583 pracowników produkcyjnych. Wyniki badań wskazały na silny związek między kulturą pracy a postawami w pracy (np. znaczenie pracy dla pracownika, zaangażowanie, zdyscyplinowanie, wysiłek włożony w pracę) oraz zachowaniami w pracy (np. efektywność, sprawność, absencja, zwolnienia z pracy).

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE –** KULTURA PRACY, PRACA, KULTURA

Introduction

Work as a social behavior, is perceived as reflection of social interaction. As a natural result, there is a strong relation between work-individual-society. The individual indigenizes this relation by attributing a meaning to it through the period from his birth till his death. The unique social structure that each society has, is the basic reason of this. Each society, in a way, is the compound of the values and beliefs of the individuals that bring that society into existence.

Work is shaped under impact of many factors by its very quality. Demographic and psychological factors at micro level and structure of the society, values, politics, economy and social-cultural factors at macro level are effective whereas reflection of cultural factors on work brings forth the work culture concept. In this regard the work concept can be conceived as reflection of cultural motifs of the related society on the work. Therefore, the work culture can be characterized as a cultural based indication of the work life of that society

This study, in which the impact of work culture differences on work attitudes is examined in comparison with Turkey versus Poland, on one hand explores a rich concept such as the work culture, on the other hand tries to explain the work culture differences with this model with the aim of uncovering such differences. Thus, the relation between the variables in work culture model is such as to backup the facts mentioned in the first and the second sections. As independent variables, meaning of work, work commitment, work discipline and as dependent variables efficiency, performance, absenteeism and turnover intention are being addressed with the aim of explaining work culture.

1. Conceptual analysis of work culture

Work, due to its characteristics, is not just a psychological or behavioral concept. Thus, the work behavior of persons is complicated rather than being simple and is shaped with the impact of various factors. Work activity embraces a social value and reflects the individual and social qualities. In this regard, individual and society generate the content of work concept together.

Therefore, work is an outcome of mutual and continuous interaction of an individual and society.

The interaction between social relations and the culture come into existence with the culture shaping the thoughts, expectations and behaviors with its dynamic concept. Social relation and interaction enable culture to be effective in many fields. Thus, work is one of those. Sociologist Goffman, an expert in anthropology, explains the impact of culture on work and management as: "Culture, has an astatic, dynamic structure and effects thoughts, behaviors and values of people with social impact." Goffman, underlining the commitment of the employees to the team they belong, emphasizes the importance of such interaction on embodiment of ideologies.[1]

Johnson explains the group-ideology relation of Goffman, based on Marx's point of view and in his study "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" he tells that it effects the culture-social relations definition of Marx in three ways. In his findings, he;[2]

1. explains the relation of cultural processes with social relation, with factors such as social relation, age, sex and race by emphasizing class awarness (working class) and formation;
2. stated that culture is a supporting force for enhancing skills of an individual and social groups;
3. culture is the focus of social differences and struggles which seems to be supporting his aforementioned other two findings.

Based on all the discussed point of views, it is possible to explain the impact of culture on behaviors at workplace and expactations of the individual related with the work environment, with work culture.

Megill in his "Work Culture Transformation Board" study defines work culture as "group of assumptions, understanding and beliefs that come into existence in a certain workplace under the impact of social interaction, manifests itself with a clear and

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[1] Cf. E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Doubleday Anchor Books, New York 1959, p. 10.

[2] Cf. R. Johnson, *What is Cultural Studies Anyway?*, "Social Text", No. 16, Duke University Press, 1987, p. 39.

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distinctive pattern and shared with the workers."[3] Lotze, being influenced by this definition, made a definition in this extend and defined work culture as "the common sense the employers bring to their enterprise."[4] As for Pierce, the work culture "determines the outfit-like financial cultural elements and adequacy criteria to be used to set boundaries to the expectations and behaviors of an individual in his work life."[5] Another definition is made by Sunder. For Sunder work culture is "the continuously changing expectations in which conflicts and negotiations take place."[6]

Although each definition considers a different aspect of work culture, there is no definiton that explains work culture with an integrated approach, yet. Thus there is a need for a definiton that inholds all definitions and defines work culture with every aspect of it. Such a definition can be as:

> Work culture, influenced by the culture of the society we live in, is a set of attitudes and behaviors towards meaning of work, work commitment, and work efforts.

2. Factors effecting work culture

Work culture is influenced by many and complicated factors. Although some of those factors are personal and related with the psychological features of the individual, others are social such as social and cultural conditions.[7] The relation between the individual and work, is not only limited with the inner world and work conditions of the individual. The personal factors that generate the meaning of work for the individual are socio- psychological such as emotions, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors of that person. Social factors on the other hand, are economical, political

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[3] K.A. Megill, *Thinking for a Living: The Coming Age of Knowledge Work,* Walter de Gruyter, Munich 2004, p. 57.

[4] E. Lotze, *Work Culture Transformation: Straw to Gold – The Modern Hero's Journey,* Walter de Gruyter, Munich 2004, p. 11.

[5] J.L. Pierce, *Gender trials: Emotional lives in contemporary law firms*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1995, p. 184.

[6] M. Sunder, *Cultural Dissent*, "Stanford Law Review", Vol. 54, 2001, p. 495.

[7] Cf. W.S. Neff, *Work and Human Behavior,* Atherton Press, New York 1968, p. 242.

and socio-cultural at macro level.[8] The meaning of work under the complicated impacts of these factors, varies for each person depending on personal variables such as his socio-psychological structure, age and sex whereas there may be differences between societies, even between socio-economic classes, sub-cultures, occupational and professional groups within the same society.[9] Harris stated that the work culture is basicly shaped under influence of personal, social and organizational factors.[10]

From personal factors point of view, many attitudes very different from each other and cannot be generalized, arising from psychological and demographic features of the individual which come into existence towards the same object can be mentioned.[11] On the contrary, when the social factors are considered, it is possible to speak of attitudes shaped under same social and cultural conditions which are similar and can be generalized for the entire social structure.[12] It is possible to make the same generalization for the organizational factors, in the same manner. Mutual and continuous interaction of these factors shapes the work culture, as well.[13]

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim and Significance of the Study

This is an international, quantitative study that aims to examine work culture concept which is limitedly studied in national and international literature, in terms of countries with different socio-cultural

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[8] R. Westwood, P. Lok, *The Meaning of Work in Chinese Contexts. A Comparative Study*, "International Cross Cultural Management", Vol. 2/3, 2003, p. 142.

[9] N. Peterson, R. Gonzoles, R. Cortez, *The Role of Working in People's Lives,* Brooks/Cole, U.S.A. 1999, p. 67-69.

[10] P.R. Harris, *The New Work Culture,* HRD Press, Amherst 1998, p. 6.

[11] J. Arnold, J. Silvester, *Work Psychology: Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace,* Pearson Education, London 2005, p. 7-9.

[12] R. Firth, *Antropological Background to Work*, in: *The Social Dimensions of Work*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1972, p. 15.

[13] Compare: F. Luthans, *Organizational Behavior,* Mc Graw Hill, New York 1995; S.P. Robbins, *Organizational Behavior,* Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall Inc, New Jersey 2005.

structure like Turkey versus Poland. Work culture, a resultant of interaction of work attitude and behaviors, is very important in terms of individual, organization and society. In this regard, the impact of work culture differences on work attitude constitutes the basic goal of this study. With this aim, we tried to evaluate the differences of work attitude and behaviors in Turkey and Poland, both of which has different cultural structures, in accordance with work culture model. Data determined from blue color workers of companies in confectionary and chocolate products sectors in Turkey and in Poland was used in this study which was conducted with the aim to prove the work culture differences.

3.2. The Model of the Study

A basic hypothesis demonstrating the relation between work culture differences and work behavior and suggesting that "the differences between Turkish and Polish work culture make different work behaviors" was built in accordance with the model of the study. The independent variables constitute the work related attitude of the individuals whereas dependent variables involve their work behaviors. Figure 1 shows the variables at issue.

Figure 1. Variables of the Study
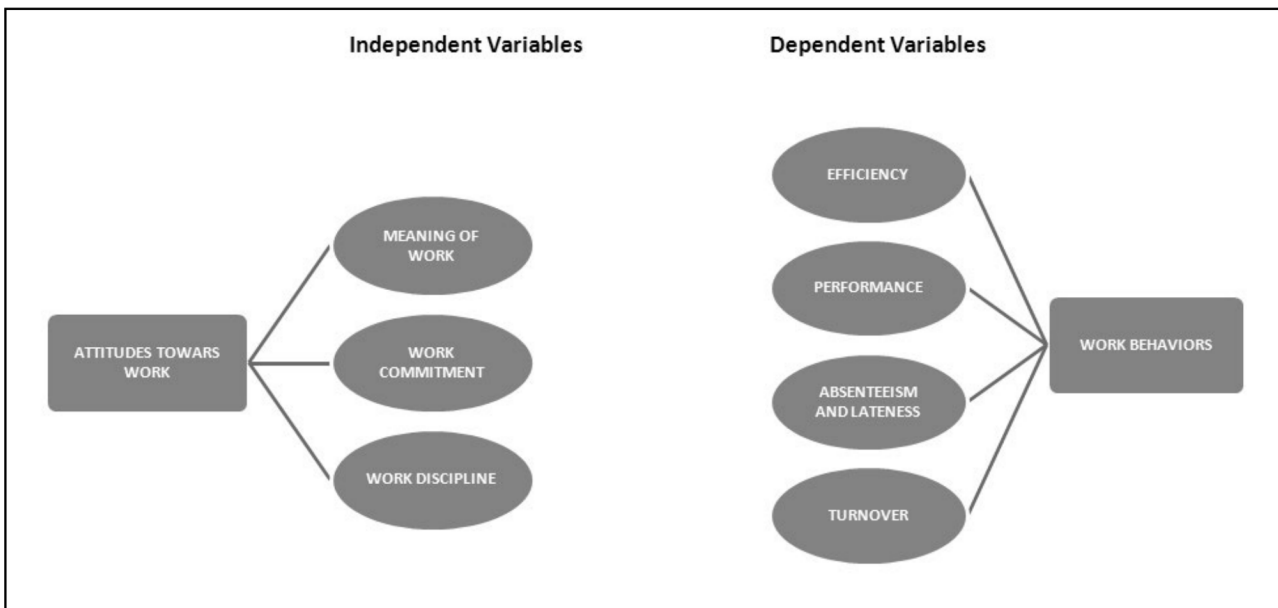
3.3. Sample and Measurements

The sample of this study is blue color workers in confectionary and chocolate products sectors in Turkey and in Poland. In this regard, three large scale chocolate companies which agreed to take part in this study were chosen. A survey in Turkish and in Polish was conducted to the workers of companies located in two different regions and three different cities in Turkey (Gaziantep, Kocaeli, Sakarya) and in two different cities of Poland (Krakow, Skawina 1, Skawina 2). As a result, 600 survey forms were delivered to the organizations in Turkey and Poland and 583 of them were returned as usable survey.

A survey technique was used in accordance with the model of the to determine the work attitude of the participants. Also an interview technique was used to collect objective data of the workers about their work behaviors. With this aim, meaning of work, work commitment and work discipline scales were used as independent variables whereas efficiency, performance, absenteeism and turnover intention data were used as dependent variables. As a result of the reliability analysis, it was verified that the question forms applied to the participants were reliable in terms of the established criteria.

The results determined as a result of the study, were downloaded in SPSS program and were subjected to the required analysis in 20.0 version. Descriptive statistics, t test, t test for paired two groups, one-way analysis of variance, correlation and regression analysis were used in the conducted analysis.

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic Findings

The demographic data related with the sample, determined in scope of descriptive statistics are as Table 1:

Table 1. Findings Related with Demographic Features

Country	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Turkey	297	50.9
Poland	286	49.1
Sex		
Female	264	45.3
Male	319	54.7
Age		
16-25	170	29.2
26-35	246	42.2
36-45	90	15.4
46-55	56	9.6
55 +	21	3.6
Marital Status		
Married	289	49.5
Single	294	50.5
Education		
Primary school	20	3.4
High Sch.&Equivalent	341	58.5
Associate Degree	222	38.1
Religion		
Muslim	299	51.3
Christian (Catholic)	255	43.8
No religion	20	3.4
Other	9	1.5
Work Experience		
1-5 years	208	35.7
5-10 years	136	23.3
11-15 years	100	17.2
16-20 years	36	6.2
20 years and more	103	17.7
TOTAL	583	100

As seen in Table 1, 49,1% of the participants were Polish, 50.9% were Turkish, 54.7% of the sample group was male and 45.3% was female. When age of the participants were checked, it was verified that 29.2% was between 16-25 years old, %42.2 was 26-35, 15.4% was 36-45, 9.6% was 46-55 and 3.6% was 56 years old or older. As for the marital status, 49,5% of the workers were married and 50,5% were single. When the religion of the participants were inspected, it was verified that 51.3% of them were Muslim whereas 43.8% were Christian (Catholics). 3.4% of them did not belong to any religion and religion of 1.5% was different than the current ones. As for the education of the workers, 3.4% were graduated from primary school, 58.5% from high school or its equivalent and 38.1% were holding an associate degree.

4.2. Statistical Findings

As a result of the t-test conducted to verify the differences of work culture, it was observed that there was a meaningful difference between the Turkish and the Poland samples regarding their attitudes towards the work culture.

Table 2. Result of T-Test in regards with Countries

	Country	N	Average	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Work Culture	Poland	286	3,3688	,26436	-12,734	581	**,000**
	Turkey	297	3,6919	,34189	-12,795	555,325	**,000**

The attitude of the Turkish participants were more positive than the Polish ones. Table 2 displays this result. Table 3, on the other hand involves the evaluation of both of the countries in regards to demographic variables.

Table 3. Results of T Test and Anova Analysis in regards to Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Work Culture	
	t/F	p
Sex	,512	,609
Marital Status	,331	,718
Age	3,994	**,004**
Religion	55,264	**,000**
Education	32,328	**,000**
Work Experience	3,750	**,005**

The results of the t-test about the attitude of the participants towards work culture, according to their sexes, suggested that there was no difference in the attitude of the participants towards work culture based on their sexes. As for their marital status, it was verified that marital status did not generate any diversity of the attitude of the participants towards work culture whereas there were meaningful differences in Turkey. It was observed that the mentioned diversity was originated from married workers as it was for work commitment and the attitude was more positive

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for the married participants than the single ones. There were also significant differences in samples of the two countries, based on the age, education and work experience of the participants. The observed diversity suggested that the higher the education level, age and work experience got the more positive the attitudes became.

As for the work attitude towards work culture based on religion, it was observed that the attitude of the Muslim participants was more positive that the Christians and the ones that did not belong to any religion. In this regard, it can be suggested that religion has an impact on work discipline and work culture related attitudes.

Correlation analysis was conducted to verify the level (degree-strength-power) and direction of relation between the variables of the work culture model. When the correlation results in Poland are evaluated there is a positive relation between the independent variables (meaning of work, work commitment and work discipline). Furthermore there is a high and positive relation between the independent variables and work culture. As for the dependent variables, there is a positive relation between work culture and performance and efficiency whereas the relation between the work culture and absenteeism is high and negative.

When the correlation results in Turkey are evaluated, the positive relations between the independent variables determined in Poland can be suggested for Turkey as well. Likewise, there is a high and positive relation between the independent variables and work culture. The relation between the work culture and performance based on independent variables is negative and the relation between the work culture, efficiency and absenteeism is negative.

Conclusion

Work culture is a concept shaped with the impact of many versatile and complicated personal, social and organizational factors. Therefore, it can be suggested that work culture should not be considered independent from the society it belongs to and from the factors that shape the society and it has structure that might be different in every culture. The cultural differences arising differences in work culture also supports the suggestions.

The results related with the work attitude and behaviors are also important to verify the work culture differences. In this regard, it can only be possible to verify at which rate the attitudes of individuals are converted into work behaviors and the direction of the interaction between work attitude and behaviors, by evaluating the work culture. Comparing the subjective expressions of an individual related with work, versus objective outputs such as work behaviors would be enlightening to verify the work culture differences. It would be possible to make points about work culture through the relation between work attitude and behaviors.

The results of the study in regards with the work culture in general suggest that:

- Sex and marital status do not have any impact on the work culture
- The higher the education level, age and work experience get the more positive the attitudes become.
- The work attitude of the Muslim sample towards work culture are higher than the Christians, other individuals that belong to other religions and the ones with no religion
- Although the work attitude of the Turkey sample workers towards work culture is more positive than the Poland sample workers, behaviors of the workers in Poland are more in conformity with the structure mentioned in the model.

According to the aforementioned results of the study, shaping of work culture in Turkey and Poland samples under different variables supports the basic hypothesis of this study which suggests that "the differences of work culture of Turkey and Poland result in different work behaviors." The findings regarding these differences demonstrate that although the meaning of work, work commitment and work discipline of the participants in Turkey are higher than the ones in Poland, the features of work behaviors are not similar. Thus it is observed that compared to Poland, Turkey has basic problems in regards with the work behaviors. It is interesting that although the attitude of Turkey towards work culture is more positive than Poland, the efficiency is lower and absenteeism is higher than Poland.

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