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Interactive Effects of National Culture & Different Types of Fits (PO, PS and PG Fit) on Creation of Facades of Conformity and its subsequent impact on Employee's Performance

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Abstract

The personal values of employee may differ from the values of the leader, group or organisation that they work with and each may therefore have a potential to lead the employees to create false representations of themselves, while at work. Although there has been a growing interest in studying the notion of facades of conformity over the last decade, most of the existing studies have focused primarily on highlighting the lack of alignment between the organisational values and those possessed by the individual employees working in that organisation and how this lack of person – organisation (PO) fit leads the employees to create false representations at work. No study yet has tried to relate this increasingly becoming popular notion of facades of conformity with the lack of person group (PG) fit or Person-Supervisor (PS) fit etc that employees may experience at their workplace. While deriving its foundations from congruence framework / protection motivation theory, this study not only aims to present the lack of person-group fit, person-supervisor fit (in addition to person organisation fit which already exists in the literature) as important antecedents of facades of conformity at workplace; it also takes into account the cross-cultural differences that exist between nations) and stresses the need to examine the interactive effects of these three types of fits with three different cultural dimensions of the Hofstede's Model i.e collectivism, power distance and long term orientation on creation of facades of conformity in the organisations operating internationally.

Keywords: Facades of Conformity, Person Group Fit, Person Supervisor Fit, Person Organization Fit, National Culture, Hofstede.

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Introduction:

Facades of conformity (FOC) are defined as false representations created by employees to appear as if they embrace organizational values (Hewlin 2003, p1). When employees feel that their personal values do not match with those of their organization, they respond by pretending to fit in (Hewlin, Dumas and Burnett, 2017). Oldham's article, as well as similar writings (DuBrin, 1990; Jackall, 1988; Ibarra, 1999 & Brief et al., 2000) suggest that survival and success of the employees primarily depend on how well they conform to the prevailing norms and values of their working groups, peers, supervisors or the organization as a whole. Since they consider it important to survive and succeed in that organisation, they often try to suppress their personal values and act as if their personal values align very well with an organization's values when in reality, they don't (Sharma, 2013; Hewlin, Kim and Song, 2016) just to seek their desirable career outcomes.

This study not only aims to present the lack of person-group fit, person-supervisor fit (in addition to person organisation fit which already exists in the literature) as important antecedents of facades of conformity at workplace; it also takes into account the cross-cultural differences that exist between nations) and stresses the need to examine the interactive effects of these three types of fits with three different cultural dimensions of the Hofstede's Model i.e. collectivism, power distance and long term orientation on creation of facades of conformity in the organisations operating internationally.

While deriving its foundations from congruence framework and protection motivation theory, this study suggests that employees may not necessarily create facades of conformity only when they believe their personal values conflict with those of the organisation, they may also do so if

their own individual values do not match with those of their supervisor or colleagues that they work with in their everyday organisational life.

Using Popper's Critical Rationalism approach, this study intends to bridge the gap by focusing specifically on the relationships between different types of fits (i.e. person- group fit /person supervisor fit/person-organization fit) and creation of facades of conformity at workplace and explains how the false representations created by the employees at workplace can yield certain negative outcomes both for the employees as well as the organisation that they work for.

The personal values of employee may differ from the values of the leader, group or organisation that they work with (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Time, Derks & Baker, 2016; Sessa & London, 2006) and each may therefore have a potential to lead the employees to create false representations of themselves, while at work (Hewlin, 2009). Although there has been a growing interest in studying the notion of facades of conformity over the last decade, most of the existing studies have focused primarily on highlighting the lack of alignment between the organisational values and those possessed by the individual employees working in that organisation and how this lack of person – organisation (PO) fit leads the employees to create false representations at work (Hewlin 2009; Stormer & Devine 2008 & Phillips, Louisiana & Kirkman 2016; Hewlin, Dumas and Burnett, 2017). None of these studies has yet tried to relate this increasingly becoming popular notion of facades of conformity with the lack of person group (PG) fit or Person-Supervisor (PS) fit etc that employees may experience at their workplace.

From an epistemological point of view, the study follows Popper's Critical Rationalism approach (Popper 1959) and intends to bridge the gap by focusing specifically on the relationships between different types of fits (i.e person- group fit /person supervisor fit/person-organization fit) and creation of facades of conformity at workplace and explains how the false representations created

by the employees at workplace can yield certain negative outcomes both for the employees as well as the organisation that they work for.

Literature Review:

Theories of person-environment (PE) compatibility have been a part of the management literature for more than hundred years now (e.g. Parsons, 1909; Lewin, 1935; Murray, 1938; Pervin, 1968; Ekehammer, 1974 etc cited in Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). The congruence model (Nadler & Tushman 1997) is considered to be one of the most popular frameworks discussed in OB Literature (Sackman, 2017) and it views organizations as mutually interacting components that exist in relative harmony or fit with one another. The four main components of the model include: individuals, tasks, formal processes/structure and informal processes/culture (Nadler & Tushman 1997). According to congruence framework, organizational problems arise when there is a poor fit between some of these components (Lin, 2014 & Awan & Fatima, 2018).

More specifically, alignment of employees' values with those of their organization, peers and supervisors have emerged as some of the key research domains in the area (Schneider, Smith & Paul, 2001; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005) and are often referred to as, *Person-Organisation* (PO) fit, *Person – Group* (PG) fit & *Person- Supervisor* (PS) fit in the literature.

While *Person-Organisation* (PO) fit, refers to the degree to which compatibility exists between an individual's deeply held beliefs and organisational values (Chatman, 1989; Verquer et al., 2003), *Person – Group* (PG) fit emphasises more on interpersonal compatibility between employees and their work groups (Werbel& Gilliland, 1999). *Person- Supervisor* (PS) fit on the other hand is generally used to describe the extent to which similarity/congruence exists between

an employee's own personal values and those of his /her immediate supervisor (Colbert, 2004). There is enormous amount of recent literature which suggests how these different types of fits or lack thereof can influence the choices made by employees while at work (Bright, 2007; Lauver & Kristof- Brown, 2001;Liu, Liu & Hu, 2010; Vuuren, Veldkamp & DeJong, 2007) and how each of these are linked with various job outcomes (Marstand, Martin & Epitropaki 2017; Pierro et al., 2015; Astakhova, 2016; Lam, Huo & Chen, 2018).

Impression management is another notion in organisational behaviour which is becoming increasingly popular in the recent literature. It involves displaying certain behaviours to modify one's image in the other's eyes, mainly to gain their social moral and/or financial support (Rosenfeld, Edwards & Thomas, 2015).

Within an organisational setting, one's image (positive or negative) in the eyes of others can leave a quite significant impact on one's employment opportunities, job effectiveness, career growth and status in the organisation (Liu, Wang and Wayne, 2015 & Elliot et al., 2018). In today's working environment (where one's career related outcomes are so strongly influenced by the perceptions of the other people that one works with e.g supervisors, peers etc) and particularly in cases where there is a perceived lack of congruence (Klotz et al., 2018), choosing to "be yourself" can certainly be a terrible course of action (Grant 2016) there. Protection motivation (PM) theory (Rogers, 1975) explains how individuals process threats and select responses to cope with the danger brought about by those threats (Hodgkins & Orbell,1998 & Plotnikoff 2010). Employees in these kinds of situations are therefore often left with no choice but to create facades of conformity at their workplace.

Proposition 1: There is a negative relationship between person-supervisor fit and creation of facades of conformity in the organisation.

Proposition 2: There is a negative relationship between person-group fit and creation of facades of conformity in the organisation.

Proposition 3: There is a negative relationship between person-organisation fit and creation of facades of conformity in the organisation.

The person - environment compatibility which often includes all these three types of fits (Person Supervisor Fit, Person Group Fit and Person Organisation Fit) has been reported in the literature as an important predictor of certain job outcomes e.g Job Satisfaction, Job Performance etc (Lyons & O'Brien 2006; Bright, 2007 & Whitman et al., 2010). Several researchers have reported that workers who perceive a higher level of fit with the environment they work in, usually produce a higher standard of work performance (Judge, et al., 2001; Saari & Judge, 2004) than those who don't (Hamstra, Van Vianen & Koen 2018). Similarly, adequate amount of literature now exists (Anjum, 2015; Hewlin, Kim and Song, 2016; Liang, 2017) to suggest a negative linkage between false representations created at workplace and various employee level outcomes such as Affective Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance etc.

Proposition 4: There is a negative relationship between facades of conformity and employees job performance.

While deriving its foundations from congruence framework (Nadler & Tushman 1997) and protection motivation theory (Rogers 1975), this study suggests that employees may not necessarily create facades of conformity only when they believe their personal values are in conflict with those of the organisation, they may also do so if their own individual values do not

match with those of their supervisor or colleagues that they work with in their everyday organisational life.

Theoretical Framework

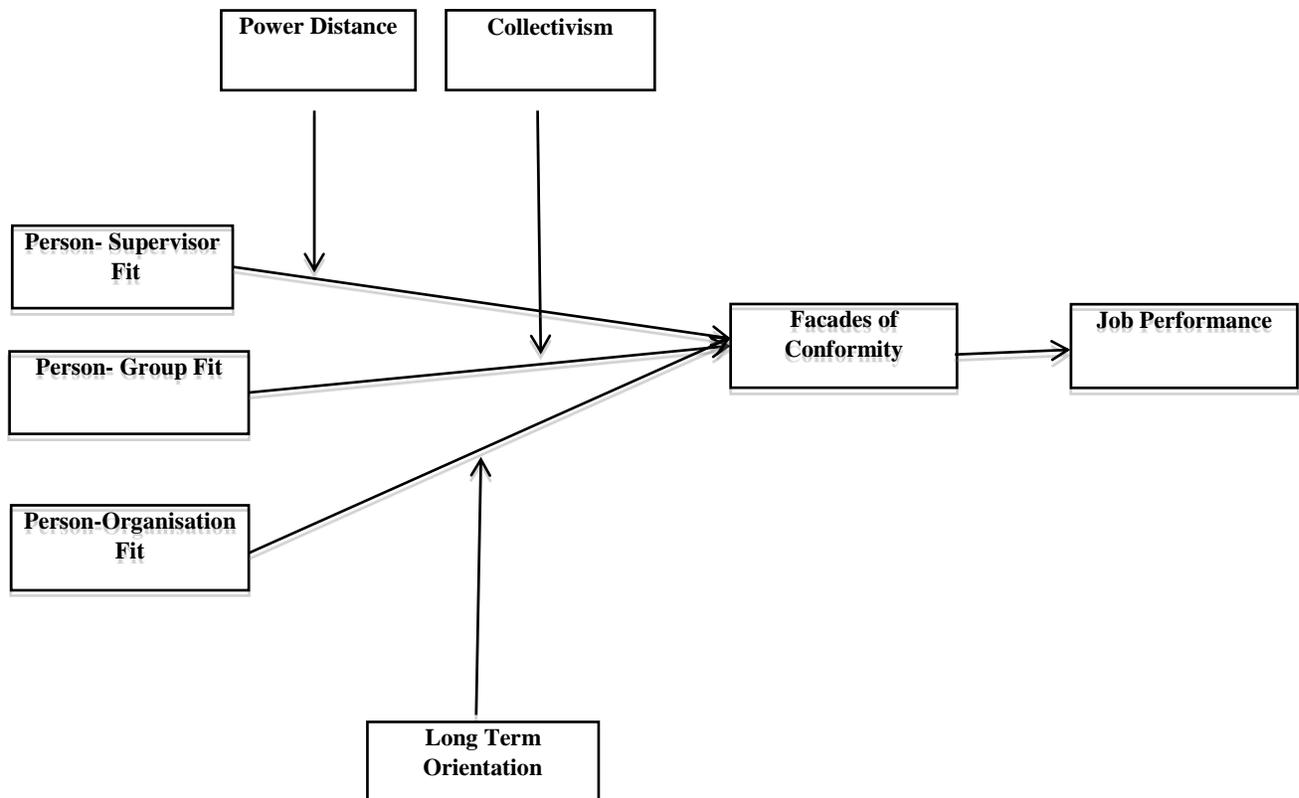


Figure 1: The Interactive effects of different types of fits (PS Fit, PG Fit & PO Fit) and various dimensions of national culture on creation of facades of conformity in international firms and their subsequent impact on Employee's Performance.

The study not only aims to present the lack of person-group fit, person-supervisor fit (in addition to person organisation fit which already exists in the literature) as important antecedents of facades of conformity at workplace; it also takes into account the cross-cultural differences that exist between nations (Hofstede 1984, 2009; Javidan et al., 2006; Selwyn, 2013) and stresses the

need to examine the interactive effects of these three types of fits with three different cultural dimensions of the Hofstede's Model i.e collectivism, power distance and long term orientation on creation of facades of conformity in the organisations operating internationally and how that adversely impacts the employees performance in those organisations.

“Divergence Thesis” is becoming more and more popular in cross cultural literature and researchers following this school of thought have always tried to relate the deeply held beliefs/values of the employees with various job outcomes (Nardon & Steers, 2009; Prinz, 2016; Hondzel & Gulliksen, 2015 & Hareven, 2018). Following divergence school of thought, this study proposed that a society's culture where the employees have largely been “mentally programmed” (Bond 2002, Minkov, 2007, 2008 & 2009 & Hofstede 2009) may have a strong potential to moderate these relationships that exist between different types of fits and creation of facades of conformity at workplace.

The Moderating Role of National Culture:

"Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, 2011, P3)

In the context of globalization and growing economic interdependence between countries, understanding the national culture is becoming increasingly important and is therefore considered to be a key pre-requisite for effective management of contemporary business organisations (Selwyn - 2013; Matijević, Raguž & Filipović, 2015; Boscari et al. 2018).

Despite the amount of criticism that it has generated over a period of time (Steenkamp, 2001; Brons, 2006; Javidan et al., 2006), Hofstede 's Cultural Framework is still the most recognized

and most widely cited study on national culture (Dickson, Hartog, Mitchelson, 2003; Jones, 2007, Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvien, 2017).

Though Hofstede's Model includes 07 cultural dimensions in total, this study intends to focus more on the first three of these dimensions:

- i) High vs Low Power Distance
- ii) Collectivism vs Individualism
- iii) Long Term vs Short Term Orientation
- iv) High vs Low Uncertainty Avoidance
- v) Masculinity vs Femininity
- vi) Indulgence versus Restraint
- vii) Monomentalism versus Flexhumility

Person Supervisor Fit and Power Distance:

Power Distance refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2011). In higher power distant societies, where organisations tend to have relatively taller structures (Khatri , 2009 ; Wei, 2016; Skoumpopoulou & Catherine , 2018) allowing the supervisors a greater deal of freedom to make employees' career related decisions (e.g Retention/Growth/Promotion etc) based on their subjective assessment, employees are more likely to create false representations at workplace, if they perceive a low person-supervisor fit at their workplace (Hofstede, 2011; Daniels, 2014; Hacker, 2017) than the employees working in lower power distance societies who are generally reluctant to accept the authority/unequal distribution of power in their social settings which includes their workplace (Hofstede 1984,

2009). It is therefore proposed that the negative relationship between person-supervisor fit and facades of conformity will be stronger for the employees working in higher power distant societies than the employees born and brought up in the lower power distant societies.

Proposition 5: Power Distance moderates the relationship between Person Supervisor fit and Facades of Conformity such that relationship will be stronger for the employees working in higher power distance societies.

Person – Group Fit and Collectivism:

Collectivism/Individualism is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. In Individualistic cultures, the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. In collectivist cultures on the other hand, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, right from their birth onwards (Hofstede, 2011). The organisational life in collectivist societies is generally characterised by harmony, associating value to the relationships, working whole heartedly towards team's goals, promoting a "we feeling", and getting motivated with team based rewards etc(Rode, Huang and Flynn, 2016; Keller, Chen & Leung, 2018 & Yu, Matta and Cornfield, 2018)

Since employees with collectivistic orientation associate a greater value to the relationships and strive to maintain a group harmony, we propose that the negative relationship between person-group fit and facades of conformity will be stronger for the employees working in the collectivist parts of the world (where organisations generally value team work and employees also don't find it very hard to suppress their emotions and sacrifice their individual interests for a greater overall interest of the group that they belong to) relative to their counterparts in individualistic societies who would rather prefer to have a loosely-knit social framework around them (Hofstede, 2009,

2011) allowing a greater flexibility to consider their own individual interest(e.g emotional well-being) to be supreme in most (if not all) situations (Hofstede, 2009 & Kirkman et al, 2016).

Proposition 6: Collectivism moderates the relationship between Person- Group fit and Facades of Conformity such that relationship will be stronger for the employees working in the collectivist societies.

Person – Organisation Fit and Long Term Orientation:

The dimension of Long term Orientation vs Short Term Orientation is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present (Hofstede, 2011). Employees born and brought up in long term oriented societies tend to value more the life time employment, job security, Retirement benefits, Pensions etc (Holzmann & Stiglitz, 2001; Taylor and Geldhauser, 2007 & Guo et al., 2018) whereas the employees who have been mentally programmed with short term orientation tend to follow a “Protean Career” pathway in their professional life (Direzzo, Greenhaus & Weer, 2015; Bravo et al., 2015). The negative relationship between person organisation fit and creation of facades of conformity at workplace is therefore believed to be stronger for the employees emphasising long term orientation than the members of short term oriented societies who are generally not prepared to delay the instant gratification of their emotional, physical or recreational needs for the future (Andreassi & Lawter, 2014 & Kraman et al 2018).

Proposition 7: Long Term Orientation moderates the relationship between Person- Organisation fit and Facades of Conformity such that relationship will be stronger for the employees working in the Long Term Orientation societies.

Based on strong literature support, we have tried to offer a framework to enhance our understanding on (1) how lack of person supervisor fit and person group fit can also lead to creation of facades of conformity in the organisations in addition to the lack of person organisation fit that is already reported/researched extensively in the literature (2) How the interaction between various national cultural dimensions and different types of fits (Person-Supervisor Fit, Person- Group Fit etc) influences the extent to which false representations are created in the workplace and (3) how these false representations created by employees are linked directly with their job performance. Rather than limiting the notion of facades of conformity to lack of person-organisation fit only, exploring other key predictors of facades of conformity is important to advance research on this topic. Though, the paper lacks empirical evidence and was primarily aimed at conducting an extensive review of the literature, critically rationalising it and developing a solid set of propositions, it will certainly help future researchers to test these relationships empirically and if the propositions in this article are found to be true, there will be some important implications for managers/practitioners. The study will help the managers of international firms in developing a good understanding of how perceived lack of “values congruence” with the supervisor, peers or organisation can lead to false representations at work place, which type of fit (or lack thereof) will be more important in which type of a cultural setting, how lack of each type of fit interacts with different cultural orientations of the employees (who have been mentally programmed in different parts of the world) and how that interaction may impact the employees tendency to create facades of conformity differently in different parts of the firm’s global operations. The study provides basis to develop a concrete set of guidelines for international managers/practitioners to further refine their existing HR practices/ processes and encourages managers of international firms to follow a culturally sensitive approach as a part of their efforts to minimise the chances of false representations being created by their workers

across the globe. Following such an approach will not only assist in enhancing the satisfaction /performance of their employees (working in different parts of the world), it will also play a very significant role in alleviating the firm's performance.

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