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Cross-Cultural Analyses Between USA and Japan: Personality, Emotional Strategies, and Job Performance of Customer Service Employees

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ABSTRACT

The previous theory suggests that individuals may experience less stress when engaging in activities that are personality congruent. In this research, the author first tries to answer what kind of personality in the Big-five personality model of customer service employees are more or less likely to practice better job performance. And second, this study tries to answer the question of the best emotional strategies, affective delivering, surface acting, and deep acting, to easily practice for the specific type of employees to perform emotion regulation tasks. This study also tries to answer the question of who can best manage their emotions to produce the required emotional expression without appearing insincere or experiencing increased stress. Finally, the author compares the result from the USA and Japanese data to reveal the similarity and differences between the two.

Keywords: Job performance, Personal traits, Emotional strategies, Customer service employees

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism business has been undergoing a severe crisis since the COVID-19 outbreak (Bajram et al., 2021). The pandemic has been especially hard- hit by the airline industry, leading to a steep drop in financial performance and an increase in employee career turnover (Abate et al., 2020). Airline workers have been suffering risks of job instability even before COVID-19. For example, many traditional airlines have reduced costs and changed employment relationships due to deregulation and intensified competition such that LCC carriers (Low-Cost Carriers) entered the market (Okabe, 2017). Then, airlines worldwide have continued to operate with as few people as possible. In other words, the professional role required of customer service employees such as flight attendants has gradually changed over the past few decades. But with the recent outbreak of COVID-19, organizations face a grand challenge of unparalleled proportions, one that meets them to drive into and directly manage unprecedented territory as they alter their workforce in technical, physical, and socio-psychological ways not seen before (Carneval & Hatak, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a particularly challenging environment for human resource management (HRM) as managers strive to quickly venture to help their workforce adapt to and cope with radical changes occurring in the work and social environment. Remote work often could not replace customer service and human service jobs. Additionally, for most service organizations, individual service workers are direct participants in implementing the market concept of the organizations. Customer and frontline service employees' interaction is often a primary determinant of customer satisfaction. Additionally, prior research shows that customer service and human service employees must control and manage their emotions, such as anger and sadness (e.g., Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). Such emotional requirement typically has an integrative goal of showing positive display and hiding negative ones. Emotional regulation induces the employees to meet the socioemotional demand of the jobs, which vary by job category and personality (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

In this research, the author first tries to answer what kind of personality in the Big- five personality model of customer service employees are more or less likely to practice better job performance. And second, what are the best emotional strategies (affective delivering, deep acting, and surface acting) to easily practice for the specific type of employees to perform emotion regulation tasks? Finally, the author administered two US and Japanese customer service employee surveys. Then the author compares the result from the US and Japanese data to reveal the similarity and differences between the two.

Literature Review: Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Big-Five Personality Model

Prior researchers have investigated employee personality and performance (Brown et al., 2002). For example, the big five personalities can refer as follows: (1) extraversion, representing the degree to which a person is outgoing; (2) agreeableness, representing a general warmth of feeling toward others; (3) conscientiousness, representing the degree of orderliness, organization, and precision; (4) emotional stability, representing evenness and steadiness of a person's general emotional makeup; and (5) openness (or creativity), representing the person's degree of imagination or originality.

Relationship Between Psychological Contract Violation (PCV) and Job Performance

Rousseau (1989) defines the psychological contract violation as an individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party. For example, a psychological contract emerges when one party believes a promise of future return for them (e.g., pay for performance). Therefore, an obligation exists to provide future benefits. As beliefs in reciprocal and promised obligations between employee and employer, psychological contracts can, when violated, generate distrust and dissatisfaction (Rousseau, 1989). Furthermore, psychological contracts are much broader than economic and legal contracts

and include several perceptual aspects that legal agreements cannot formally incorporate. For example, customer service employees might perceive a psychological contract violation in COVID-19. Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis.
Hypothesis 1: Psychological contract violation (PCV) perceived by the employees is negatively associated with their job performance.

The Basic Moderation Model and Emotional Strategies Affective Delivery

Affective delivery or expressing positive emotions in service interaction promotes customer satisfaction (Grandey, 2003). Employee affective delivery refers to an employee expressing socially desired feelings during a service transaction (Ashforth et al., 1993). In addition, affective service delivery means friendliness and warmth related to desirable outcomes (Bettencourt et al., 2001). Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis.
Hypothesis 2: Affective delivering moderates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance.

Deep Acting and Surface Acting

Hochschild (1983) observed customer service employees using two types of dramaturgical techniques: deep acting, in which the employees feel the appropriate emotion in the workplace, and surface acting, in which the employees put on the emotional mask officially expected.
Hypothesis 3: Deep acting moderates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance.
Hypothesis 4: Surface acting moderates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance.

The Basic Mediation Model and Emotional Strategies

Generally, a given variable may function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion. Mediators explain how external physical events take on internal psychological significance (Baron & Kenny, 1986).
Hypothesis 5: Affective delivering mediates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance and transforms into the positive one. **Hypothesis 6:** Deep acting mediates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance and transforms into the positive one.
Hypothesis 7: Surface acting mediates the negative relationship between psychological contract violation (PCV) and job performance and transforms into the positive one.

METHOD

The author used the live survey application S to administer a web-based questionnaire survey of customer service employees and compare Study 1 (USA) and Study 2 (Japan). In testing the hypotheses, the author first measured the

variables used in this study in the descriptive statistics and correlation. Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics of the variables used in this study, the correlation analysis, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for both Study 1 (USA) and Study 2 (Japan). Next, the author used hierarchical moderated regression to test the hypothesized moderating effect of emotional strategies (affective delivering, deep acting, and surface acting) on job performance. Third, the author tested the mediator effects using path analysis in covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM).

RESULTS

Direct Effects

Hypothesis 1 predicted that PCV perceived by the employees is negatively associated with their job performance. For study 1 (USA), as predicted, correlation analysis (Table 1) shows a significant negative correlation between PCV and job performance ($r = -.1$, $p<.01$). For study 2 (Japan), as predicted, correlation analysis (Table 2) shows a significant negative correlation between PCV and job performance ($r = -.46$, $p<.001$). Concerning the Big-five personality, correlation analyses show significant negative correlations between PCV and almost all aspects of Big-five personalities in both study 1 (USA) and 2 (Japan) except "openness to experience" in study 2. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Moderating effect (interaction) between PCV and emotional strategies

Hypothesis 2 predicted that affective delivering moderates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance. However, the hierarchical moderated regression did not show a significant moderating effect in either study 1 (USA) or study 2 (Japan). Thus Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that deep acting moderates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance. The hierarchical moderated regression (Figure 2) showed a significant moderated effect for Study 2 (Japan). Figure 4 shows that in both high and low PCV environments, the high deep acting employees significantly show higher and better job performance than low deep acting employees in Study 2 (Japan). Conversely, the hierarchical moderated regression did not show a significant moderated effect for Study 1 (USA). Thus Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that surface acting moderates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance. The hierarchical moderated regression (Figure 1) showed a significant moderated effect (interaction) for Study 1 (USA). Figure 3 shows that in a high PCV environment, the high surface acting employees significantly show better job performance than low Surface acting employees in Study 1 (USA). Conversely, the hierarchical moderated regression did not show a significant moderated effect for Study 2 (Japan). Thus Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

Mediator Effects

The author tested the mediator effects of emotional strategies (affective delivering, deep acting, and surface acting) of customer service employees

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations for study 1 (USA).

	Variables	Mean	s.d.	α[4]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Gender[1]	.64	.48		–												
2	Tenure[2]	2.18	1.45		−.01	–											
3	Age[3]	2.76	1.32		−.05	.34***	–										
4	PCV	2.44	.93	.63	−.03	−.01	−.11**	–									
5	Job Performance	4.25	.59	.65	−.07	.02	.15**	−.17**	–								
6	Extraversion	3.24	.85	.67	.01	.03	.16**	−.07**	.13**	–							
7	Agreeableness	3.69	.75	.69	.06	.14**	.30***	−.20***	.28***	.21***	–						
8	Conscientiousness	3.91	.81	.72	.09	−.02	.28***	−.26***	.33***	.23***	.33***	–					
9	Emotional Stability	3.47	.92	.74	−.10*	.11*	.24***	−.16**	.27***	.32***	.30***	.18***	–				
10	Openness to Experience	3.65	.73	.63	−.04	.01	−.01	−.10*	.14***	.03	.13**	.10*	.11	–			
11	Affective Delivering	4.18	.65	.65	.09	.09	.26***	−.22***	.52***	.16**	.41***	.50***	.21***	.18**	–		
12	Deep Acting	3.73	.84	.77	−.02	−.01	.04	.03	.20***	.04	.15**	.14**	.06	.14**	.26***	–	
13	Surface Acting	3.48	1.02	.89	.01	−.03	−.22***	.37***	.01	−.22***	−.20***	−.24***	−.16**	−.01	−.10*	.26***	–

Note: ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05. N = 319.

[1]Gender: coded as Male = 0, Female = 1

[2] coded as 1 = 0–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 11–15 years, 4 = 16–20 years, 5 = 21–25 years, 6 = 26–30 years, 7 = more than 30 years.

[3] Age : coded as 1 = less than 18 years, 2 = 18–20 years, 3 = 30–44 years, 4 = 45–60 years, 5 = more than 60 years.

[4] Reliability represents Cronbach Alpha coefficients.

PCV: Psychological Contract Violation.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations for study 2 (Japan).

	Variables	Mean	s.d.	α[4]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Gender[1]	.54	.50		–												
2	Tenure[2]	2.87	2.06		−.45***	–											
3	Age[3]	2.35	.88		−.32***	.56***	–										
4	PCV	2.37	.75	.69	.15**	−.10	−.09	–									
5	Job Performance	3.65	.82	.89	−.14*	.26***	.32***	−.46***	–								
6	Extraversion	2.78	.99	.71	−.05	.06	.15**	−.13*	.36***	–							
7	Agreeableness	2.93	.71	.63	.02	.15**	.17**	−.03	.22**	.36***	–						
8	Conscientiousness	3.25	.76	.66	−.13	.27***	.27***	−.24**	.43***	.42***	.15**	–					
9	Emotional Stability	3.19	.76	.62	−.23**	.19**	.16**	−.26***	.27***	.27***	.18**	.43***	–				
10	Openness to Experience	2.86	.73	.72	−.20**	.10	.04	.08**	.11	.45***	.20**	.22**	.24**	–			
11	Affective Delivering	3.64	.86	.87	−.10	.25***	.30***	−.37***	.74***	.34***	.19**	.35***	.28***	.13*	–		
12	Deep Acting	3.67	.83	.90	−.14*	.24***	.23**	−.33***	.66***	.25***	.14	.28***	.21**	.10	.79***	–	
13	Surface Acting	3.72	.85	.94	−.01	.22**	.26***	−.33***	.69***	.29***	.17**	.26***	.18**	.04	−.86***	.83***	–

Note: ***p < .001, **p <. 01, *p <. 05. N = 182.
[1]Gender: coded as Male = 0, Female = 1.
[2]Tenure: coded as 1 = 0–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 11–15 years, 4 = 16–20 years, 5 = 21–25 years, 6 = 26–30 years, 7 = more than 30 years.
[3]Age: coded as 1 = less than 18 years, 2 = 18–29 years, 3 = 30–44 years, 4 = 45–60 years, 5 = more than 60 years.
[4]Reliability represents Cronbach Alpha coefficients.
PCV: Psychological Contract Violation.

Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Testing the Effects on Job Performance

Variables	*B*	*B*
1. Gender	-.07	-.08
2. Tenure	-.03	-.02
3. Age	.15	.14
4. PCV	-.19**	-.90***
5. Surface Acting	.11*	-.35**
6. Interaction (1) : PCV x Surface Acting		-.99***
F	3.999**	6.114***
Adjusted R^2	.045	.088
ΔR^2		.043

Notes: n=319. Standardized regression coefficients are reported. *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05.
PCV: Psychological Contract Violation

Figure 1: Hierarchical regression: study 1 (USA).

Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Testing the Effects on Job Performance

Variables	*B*	*B*
1. Gender	.045	.037
2. Tenure	.031	.039
3. Age	.167**	.157**
4. PCV	-.274***	-.745**
5. Deep Acting	.529***	.185**
6. Interaction (1) : PCV x Deep Acting		.495*
F	39.445***	34.001***
Adjusted R^2	.515	.522
ΔR^2		.007

Notes: n=319. Standardized regression coefficients are reported. *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05.
PCV: Psychological Contract Violation

Figure 2: Hierarchical regression: study 2 (Japan).

between PCV and job performance may transfer the initially negative relationship into a positive one using the structural equation modeling (SEM).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that affective delivering mediates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance and transfers the negative relationship into the positive one. For Study 1 (USA), as Figure 5 shows, structural equation modeling (SEM) show that affective delivering was a significant mediator between PCV and job performance. Furthermore, affective delivering transferred the negative relationship between PCV and job performance into a positive one. Conversely, SEM did not show a significant mediator effect for Study 2 (Japan). Thus Hypothesis 5 was partially supported. The goodness-of-fit summary of the SEM model shows $\chi^2/df = 2.440$, CFI = .926, TLI = .907, RMSEA = .067.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that deep acting mediates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance and transfers into the positive one. For Study 2 (Japan), as Figure 6 shows, SEM results showed deep acting was a significant mediator between PCV and job performance. However, deep

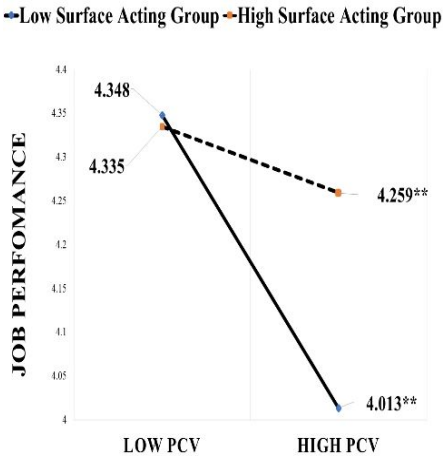

Figure 3: Moderated effect: study 1.

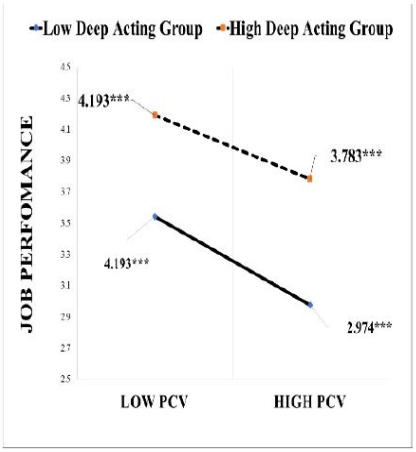

Figure 4: Moderated effect study 2.

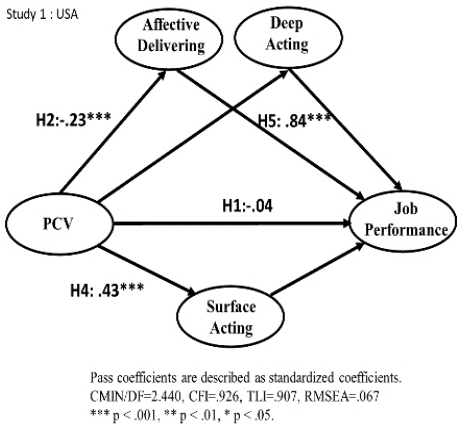

Figure 5: Mediation model: study 1.

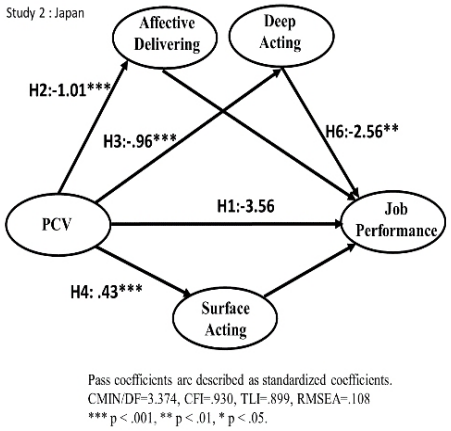

Figure 6: Mediation model: study 2.

acting did not transfer the negative relationship between PCV into a positive one for either Study 1 (USA) or Study 2 (Japan). Thus Hypothesis 6 was partially supported. The goodness-of-fit summary of the SEM model shows $\chi^2/df = 3.374$, CFI = .930, TLI = .899, RMSEA = .108.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that surface acting moderates the negative relationship between PCV and job performance and transfers into the positive one. However, SEM did not show significant moderators for either study 1 (USA) or study 2 (Japan). Thus Hypothesis 7 was rejected.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

The previous theory suggests that individuals may experience less stress when engaging in activities that are personality congruent. Moreover, occupational therapy theory, practice, and research have increasingly emphasized the transactional relationship between person, environment, and occupation. Occupational performance results from the dynamic relationship between people, their occupations and roles, and the environments in which they live, work, and play (Law et al., 1996).

In this research, the author first tries to answer what kind of personality in the Big- five personality model of customer service employees are more or less likely to practice better job performance. Then, this study found the common tendencies between the two studies. Concerning personalities, in study 1 (USA), employees with higher scores for job performance possess Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Emotional stability personalities, respectively. In study 2 (Japan), Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Emotional stability personalities, respectively. Therefore, for a customer service occupation, a person with Conscientiousness and Emotional stability personality generally would be the best fit for the profession.

And second purpose of this research is to the best emotional strategies (affective delivering, deep acting, and surface acting) to easily practice for the specific type of employees to perform emotion regulation tasks. Then, this study found the different tendencies between the two studies. For example,

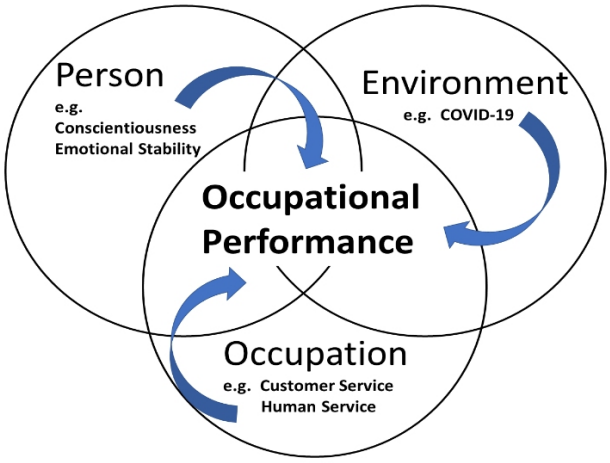

Figure 7: Maximizes fit of person, environment, and occupation.

in study 1 (USA), when the employees perceive PCV in the working environment, the employees using surface acting usually perform better than those using less surface acting. Additionally, in a psychologically tricky environment, employees eventually using affective delivering as an emotional strategy would make better performance. Conversely, in study 2 (Japan), the employees using deep acting at customer interaction performed better than those using less deep acting. This tendency is very high for Japanese employees; whenever the employees perceive higher or lower PCV in the working environment, Japanese employees would use deep acting to make better and higher performance.

Person-Environment-Occupation Fit Model assumes that its three major components (person, environment, occupation) interact continually across time and space in ways that increase or diminish their congruence (Law et al., 1996). Figure 6 shows the maximizes fit of person, environment, and occupation model. For example, customer service employees with conscientiousness or emotional stability personality would quickly and efficiently adapt to the working environment. And customer service employees using surface acting or affective delivering as an emotional strategy to adjust to the emotional requirements (USA) and deep acting (Japan) would highly tendency to adapt to a complex environment such as COVID-19.

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