

**Cultural Effects on Work Attitudes and Behaviors: The Case of American and Korean Fitness Club Employees**

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Due to the globalization of businesses around the world, it has become necessary to study employees work attitudes and behaviors in a cross-cultural setting to examine whether the established relationships among the constructs hold true for other populations. Fitness clubs are not an exception from globalization. For example, Bally Total Fitness, Curves, and California Fitness that are based in the United States have expanded their businesses to many Asian countries, such as Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Japan. By expanding their businesses overseas, these fitness clubs positions are filled with local employees; as a result, it has become important to understand how employees in different cultures are similar and different on work attitudes and behaviors in order to manage human resources more effectively. Researchers have claimed that national culture significantly influences employees work attitudes and organizational behaviors (e.g. Bae & Chung, 1997; Glazer, Daniel, & Short, 2004; Hofstede, 1980). According to Hofstede (1980), culture in the U.S. and Korea are significantly different from four aspects: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity. However, the biggest difference is that American culture is classified as an individualistic culture and Korean culture is classified as a collectivistic culture. Therefore, individualism/collectivism is used as a cultural value that impact work attitudes and behaviors in the study. In fact, many researchers have used this dimension when conducting cross-cultural studies between West and East because it is most relevant to work attitudes and organizational behaviors of employees (Lee & Gao, 2005; Pines, Ari, Utasi, & Larson, 2002). The current study proposes to investigate the cultural impact (i.e., the impact of individualism-collectivism) on the relationships among perceived support, affective commitment, intrinsic motivation, intention to leave, and work effort.

According to Pines et al. (2002), people in collectivistic culture have an expectation for interdependency and mutual support, whereas those in individualistic culture have less expectation for social support and they show self-reliance. Therefore, individuals in a collectivistic culture place higher importance on support. Based on this notion, it is hypothesized that while perceived support would positively influence affective commitment both among American and Korean employees, the strength of the relationship will be stronger among Korean employees. In addition, researchers have shown that the relationships between affective commitment and its behavioral outcomes are stronger in an individualistic culture because employees in individualistic cultures base their behavioral decisions on their attitudes while employees in collectivistic cultures are influenced by norms (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the relationship between affective commitment and work effort and the relationship between affective commitment and intention to leave will be stronger among American fitness club employees than Korean fitness club employees. Finally, due to a greater emphasis on intrinsic motivation in individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1980), the relationship between intrinsic motivation and affective commitment would be stronger in American employees; as a result, the moderating effect of intrinsic motivation will be greater among American fitness employees than among Korean fitness employees.

The purpose of the current study are two fold; (a) to statistically examine the structural relationships among the latent constructs within the model among American and Korean fitness club employees, and (b) to compare the model fit and the strength of the relationships among the constructs in these two culturally different groups of employees. The participants will be recruited by contacting a number of fitness clubs in the U.S. and Korea. A written form of proposal of the study and the instrument will be submitted to each fitness club for a review. The participants will be recruited from the fitness clubs that agree to participate in the study. Email addresses of the employees will be obtained from each fitness club and the email message with an online survey link will be sent out to the participants. When respondents voluntarily respond to the survey, their responses will be directly transmitted to the researchers. The survey will contain selected scales to assess perceived support, affective commitment, work effort, turnover intention, intrinsic motivation, and items to elicit background information (gender, age, employment status, type of fitness club, years in the fitness club, and years worked in the industry). The response format for all items in the scales will be a seven-point scale ranging from very strongly disagree (1) to very strongly agree (7). The analyses will include confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify the factor structure of the scales employed and structural equation model (SEM) procedures to test the proposed relationships in the model. In addition, as Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested, regression analysis will be used to test the moderating effect of intrinsic motivation. Finally, a multi group invariance analysis will be used to compare models with American employees and Korean employees.

The results of the study would contribute much to sport management literature in two significant ways. First, the study will be conducted in a cross-cultural setting where there has been no study examining the relationships between perceived support and employees work attitudes in fitness clubs in cross cultural settings. Second, this study will verify the moderating effect of

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intrinsic motivation on the relationship between support and affective commitment, which has been controversial in the previous studies. From a practical standpoint, based on the study results, the managers will be able to develop their human resource management plans for the culturally diverse employees.