A test of the culture-performance related distress hypothesis among employees in a collectivistic culture

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Abstract

To test the notions that people from collectivist cultures may experience more intense Sensitivity Towards being the Target of Upward Comparison (STTUC) responses the current study investigated the relationships between traditional gender role orientation and STTUC, and collectivistic cultural orientation and STTUC. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach, a convenient sample of 464 participants from various organizations in Botswana completed the questionnaire. The participants were mostly female (59.9%), in a dating relationship (67.9%), and between the ages of 20 and 57 (*M* = 32.69, *SD* = 7.43). In the main, the hypotheses were not supported as the correlation results indicated that neither collectivistic cultural orientation nor traditional gender role orientation were linked to STTUC experiences. Discussions center on the importance of reporting and suggesting theoretical justifications for the so called '"nonsignificant findings." Implications of the empirical findings and the future research directions are also discussed.

Keywords: Botswana employees, Culture, Gender-roles, Social-comparison

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1. Introduction

Cultural values, norms, beliefs, and traditions may regulate interpersonal relations and the likelihood that autonomous and/or interdependent achievements are punished or rewarded (Exline and Lobel, 1999; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1994). For example, Exline and Lobel (1999) theoretically suggested that people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to experience performance related distresses. The current study used Exline and Lobel's (1999) Sensitivity Towards being the Target of Upward Comparison (STTUC) framework to investigate the relationship between two cultural variables (i.e., collectivistic cultural orientations and traditional sex role orientations) and experiences of STTUC among the employees in Botswana. STTUC refers to an outperformer's concern about certain aspects of the outperformed person's response to outperformance (Exline and Lobel, 1997; 1999; 2001; Juola-Exline, 1998). Pheko (2012) defined an outperformer as an individual who has surpassed another in terms of outcome and/or performance; the outperformed as an individual who has been surpassed in terms of outcome and/or performance; and outperformance as an achieved and/or ascribed status difference between the outperformer and those that have been outperformed.

Suggestions that culture may influence the likelihood that autonomous and/or interdependent achievements are punished or rewarded may also mean that culture is likely to influence where the individual positions himself/herself or others, and how they react to where they and/or relevant others are positioned. For example, Pheko (2009) argued that culture may influence how women perceive themselves as leaders, how they are perceived by those that they are leading and how effective they perceive their own leadership styles and/or experiences. This makes it important for researchers to empirically investigate specific ways by which culture may make certain personal achievements to be perceived as either costly or threatening. The STTUC construct is at its infancy, with just a handful of research published about the construct. Consequently, there is also limited empirical research directly linking STTUC experiences with culture. Nonetheless, there have been suggestions that culture may influence experiences of STTUC (Exline and Lobel, 1999) as related research suggest that people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to experience performance related distresses (Triandis, 1994). The purpose of the current study was therefore to investigate the relationships between traditional gender role orientation and STTUC and collectivistic cultural orientation and STTUC. Both the theoretical and the empirical research suggest that STTUC distress may be experienced more frequently and more intensely by women than by men (Exline and Lobel, 1999; Exline *et al*., 2004; Pheko, 2012). Therefore, for reasons of comparison, males and females sub samples were also analysed separately. The findings may also aid the investigations into the challenges facing women's development and advancement, which often requires researchers to understand the impact of the cultural framework in which women are operating (Pheko, 2009).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social comparison and STTUC

Since Festinger's (1954) suggestions that people anchor their judgments through a process of social comparison, there has been a wide variety of social comparison studies. The current study focused on

working individuals. Studying social comparison processes in the work context is important because in the working lives, employees will come across others who are performing better than themselves, and others who are performing worse than themselves (Buunk, Zurriaga, Gonzalez-Roma, and Subirats, 2003). STTUC framework, which can be viewed as an extension of social comparison theory suggests that some outperformers may be distressed at the prospect of posing a threat to outperformed others, thus, in turn, experiencing STTUC (e.g., Buunk et al., 1990; Exline et al., 2004, Exline and Lobel, 1999, 2001; Henegan, 2007; Juola-Exline, 1998). Generally, engaging in downward comparison (i.e. being a target of upward comparison) has been associated with positive consequences.

Nonetheless, it has been revealed that despite the positive effect of downward comparison, being a target of upward comparison can be threatening to some outperformers. Factors that have been shown to expose the outperformer to experiences of STTUC include: characteristics of the outperformer (e.g., personality, gender, age), the comparison context, characteristics of the outperformed person, the nature of the relationship between the outperformer and the outperformed (e.g., closeness, friendliness; Exline and Lobel, 1999; Juola-Exline, 1998). STTUC may also happen in situations where outperformers reflect on how they might become like the worse off other (Buunk et al., 1990; Lockwood, 2002; Wood and van der Zee, 1997).

Specific to STTUC, the results from Pheko's (2012) study revealed that in situations where women outperformed their significant others, women are more likely to: 1) perceive others as being threatened (PCT); 2) be concerned about the outperformed persons (COP); and 3) be concerned about the relationship with the outperformed persons (CRO). Furthermore, the hypotheses suggesting negative relationship between instrumental support and experiences of STTUC and positive relationships between family work conflict and experiences of STTUC have been supported. For both partner support and family work conflict, the relationships has been confirmed across all the four components of STTUC (i.e., PCT, COP, CRO and Concern for the Self; Pheko, 2012).

2.2. Self-evaluation maintenance

According to Beach, Tesser, Mendolia, Anderson, Crelia, Whitaker and Fincham (1996), research investigating the role played by: i) one's own or one's partner's outstanding performance and the associated emotions of pride in one's partner; ii) potential contempt for one's partner; iii) pride in oneself; and iv) shame or envy that may result because of social comparison in married couples is needed. Beach *et al.*, (1996) further suggested that couples are likely to avoid outcomes that may produce negative comparison in their partners, instead prefer outcomes that support the self-evaluative needs of both the self and the partner. This warrant investigation because many couples share families, careers, and leisure interests and, thus, there are likely to be numerous opportunities for self-relevant comparisons with one's partner (Tesser, 1988).

In the current study, significant others (i.e., spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends) were introduced as comparison targets because comparison with them is probably unavoidable and is also believed to elicit STTUC. Examples of negative comparison, which are important in this study, may include situations in which a partner feels threatened because the other partner is perceived as more financially placed, and/or smarter

(Beach, et al., 1996). The outperformer's concern may lead him/her to experience discomforts such as alienation, sympathy, awkwardness, fear of rejection, and fear of retaliation (Exline and Lobel, 1999; 2001).

The Self-Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) model has been used to offer some insights into these assertions. The model explains how reflection and comparison processes are central to the maintenance of a positive self-evaluation such that when one is outperformed, comparison leads to a negative reaction whereas reflection leads to a positive reaction (Beach et al., 1996;Tesser, 1988). Both reflection and comparison are assumed to involve arousal, and both are more pronounced when the comparison target is a significant other (Tesser, 1988). The Extended Self-Evaluation Maintenance model predicts that people will feel negative about outperformance if their romantic partners are, or are perceived to be suffering negative comparison. This may also occur if the significant other believes that their partner is not benefiting from out-performance, suggesting that couples may avoid outcomes which might produce negative comparison in either partner and instead prefer outcomes that support both partners' self-evaluative needs (Beach et al., 1996). This could even be more likely in situations where individuals who obtain success in terms of income or organizational status may experience personal and social alienation, burnout, and even disappointment (Korman and Korman, 1980).

2.3. Traditional gender role orientation

Gender role has been broadly defined as a collection of norms describing expectations of qualities and behavioral tendencies associated with being a member of each gender and with prescribing behavior and qualities for each gender (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Steffen, 1984; Gushue and Whitson, 2006). These expectations may include appropriate behavioural display and/or expectations about occupation of social roles by each gender (Gushue and Whitson, 2006). This has been referred to as gender role orientation (for example, Barry and Beitel 2006; Bem, 1974; Eagly and Steffen, 1984). A consensus among some researchers is that gender role orientation exists along a continuum from Modern Sex Role Orientation (MSRO) to Traditional Sex Role Orientation (TSRO: Barry and Beitel 2006; Bem, 1974; Eagly and Steffen, 1984).

Researchers have highlighted the role of socialization on: the formation of gender role orientation, the development of attitudes towards different genders (e.g., Langlois and Downs, 1980; Lytton and Romney, 1991; Martin and Halverson, 1981; Martin, Ruble, and Szkrybalo, 2002; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000), and the formation of gender stereotypes. Social role theory has also been used to explain the formation of gender role orientation. For example, researchers such as Bem (1974), and Wood and Lindorff (2001) have used social-role theory to explain how gender roles influence formation of gender stereotypes, the qualities that members of each gender would like to possess, and social roles that members of each gender would like to occupy. Bussey and Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) of gender development and differentiation explains how gender develops. It achieves this by explaining how cognitive constructs, biological underpinnings, and socio-structural factors interact and influence each other to produce gender typed behaviors. The theory borrows from Bandura's (1986) SCT theory which basically explains how the individual's biological preparedness, his/her modeling experiences, self-standards, and her/his anticipated

outcomes governed by past success or failure in producing gender-typed behaviours play important roles in the emergence and maintenance of typed behaviours (Martin et al., 2002).

Such biological make-up may further interact with socialization and cognitive constructs to produce gender stereotypes, attitudes towards different genders and one's gender role orientation. For example, Wood and Lindorff (2001) have revealed how gender stereotypes may lead to differences in career progress seeking behaviours of both males and females. However, because gender stereotypes reflect perceivers' observations of what people do in daily life (Eagly and Steffen, 1984), gender role attitude might change if what people do in daily life changes. For instance, in a study designed to determine cohort changes in gender-role attitudes, university students were tested in 1972, 1976, 1980, and 1992. The results of these studies showed that even though men were more consistently traditional in their attitudes than women, all the groups across the years showed increased egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles (Spence and Hahn, 1997). Such findings and Eagly and Steffen's (1984) theoretical arguments imply that because there is increased representation of women in the workplace, people might have a more egalitarian view of gender roles. By similar logic, one can argue that because of the scarce representation of women in traditionally male domains like occupational prestige (Exline and Lobel, 1999; Olsson and Walker, 2003), and fields such as engineering and technology (Wilson-Kovacs, Ryan, and Haslam, 2006), people may express negative attitudes towards women in such domains.

Role congruity theory (Eagly et al., 2000; Eagly and Karau, 2002) offers a slightly different perspective on how socialized gender roles may negatively affect females in the workplace. This theory can be interpreted as asking the question: Because gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of the two sexes (Eagly and Karau, 2002), what happens if members of the opposite sex occupy the social role that is not consistent with their sex category? According to this theory, socialized gender roles may spill into organizational roles and consequently impact negatively on women's career progress. This theory reaches further than Social Role theory by specifying key factors and processes that influence congruity perceptions, and the consequence of such for prejudice and for prejudicial behaviors (Eagly and Karau 2002). The theory explains that because people tend to hold dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women, while they hold similar beliefs about leaders and men Bosak and Sczesny (2011), being a woman leader might elicit thoughts of incongruency for some individuals. Depending on how such individuals react to such incongruencies, this might pose a threat to the female outperformer.

It has been argued that TSRO can position men in the roles of providers with formal executive power and women in the roles of nurturers with referent power (Barry and Beitel 2006; Judge and Livingston, 2008). Compared to the TSR, MSR ideologies do not recognize differences between male and female roles and instead emphasize role flexibility for both males and females (Larsen and Long, 1988). Wood and Lindorff (2001) went on to further suggest that men and women's different beliefs, attitudes and values may be working concurrently or individually to impact their promotion-seeking behaviors. Gushue and Whitson (2006) examined how gender role attitudes and ethnic identity might be related to career decision self-efficacy and the traditionality of career choice goals. Their results generally showed that career decision self-efficacy fully mediated the influence of egalitarian gender role attitudes' influence on gender traditionality in career choice goals. Promotion and working in a traditionally male domain are two examples of situations

that can place women as targets of upward comparison. Consequently, if the woman is traditional in her gender role orientation such career advances or advantages may result in experiences of STTUC. This may occur because success is commonly attributed to agentic tendencies (such as, assertiveness, material success, toughness, ambition and independence) which are commonly associated with men (Hofstede, 2001; Wood and Lindorff, 2001).

Research further suggests that people with agentic tendencies have stronger motivation for achievement and value and performance (Yoo and Naveen, 2002). While stronger motivation for achievement has been commonly associated with men, other researchers have demonstrated that even women with more modern gender role orientations tend to possess higher levels of aspirations and expectations than women with traditional gender role orientations (e.g., McWhirter, Hackett, and Bandalos, 1998; O'Brien and Fassinger, 1993). Gender role orientation can therefore explain the difference between females who experience STTUC and those who do not. Specifically, in the context of outperformance, women with TSRO might experience STTUC than those with MSRO. In contrast, for men, TSRO may negatively predict experience of STTUC. TRSO therefore works individually or with other variables to influence how one reacts to being a target of upward comparison.

2.4. Collectivistic cultural orientations

Culture has many different dimensions. According to Matsumoto and Juang (2004), the individualism–collectivism dimension of culture describes the degree to which a culture focuses on the needs, and preferences of individuals (i.e. individualism) or of groups (i.e. collectivism). Compared to people in individualistic cultures who tend to value individual recognition for their performance, people in collectivistic cultures tend to be more interdependent and work for the common good of the group (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1989; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). In individualistic cultures, personal accomplishments achieved through work may be perceived as an achievement of personal ambition (Yang et al., 2000). In collectivistic cultures, identity is embedded in the social systems (e.g., the organization, family or any other group to which the individual belongs). In such a social system, interdependence and harmony among group members are emphasized (Cheung and Halpern, 2010; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Others have also suggested that individuals in collectivistic cultures may be motivated to fit in and adjust themselves to expectations and needs of others (e.g., Morling, Kitayama, and Miyamoto, 2002). For example, it has been shown that some Asians (who are commonly profiled as collectivistic) may show dissonant effects when their performances are publicized because the accompanying public scrutiny may produce worries about possible interpersonal rejection (Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, and Suzuki, 2004).

In Setswana (Botswana) culture, which can also be described as collectivistic in orientation, it is common to hear both men and women stating that "*ga dike di etelelwake namagadi pele*" meaning, a woman is not supposed to lead a group (Pheko, 2009) or "*monna thogo yalolwapa,*" meaning a man is the head of the family (Mookodi, 2000). Therefore, when women who have been exposed to such cultural teachings are put in positions as outperformers, they may anticipate some type of threat related to their personal achievements.

STTUC reactions might be understood as a form of dissonance. Hoshino-Browne, Zanna, Spencer, Zanna, Kitayama, and Lackenbauer (2005) suggest that culture may shape the situations in which dissonance is aroused. This is because one's cultural orientation does influence expectations, and when an individual's behavior departs from such expectations, the individual may experience dissonance. Research has also shown that cultural beliefs, values and norms may also influence experience of work and family issues, and the extent to which the self, one's work, and family are perceived and experienced as independent or interdependent (Schein, 1984). Researchers such as Kitayama et al., (2004) also explained that the potential rejection by liked significant others would be much more threatening to interdependent selves than for people with independent selves.

Collectivistic cultural orientation may particularly predict negative consequences of outperformance for women. According to Hoshino-Browne, et al., (2005, p. 294) "individuals encounter a myriad of choices every day ranging from very simple decisions …. to more difficult ones…. Sometimes people have to make choices not only for themselves but also for their family members or close friends". For women outperformers, such choices may be influenced by the fact that culture defines the social expectations for women's and men's roles (Cheung and Halpern, 2010). For example, when hierarchical norms of husband and wife were reversed, it was found that the Chinese women leaders were sensitive to how their husbands might lose face and consequently took actions to defend against such situations. Therefore because both history and cultural values do affect the society's acceptance of women in the workforce (Caligiuri and Tung, 1999), the current study suggests that collectivistic cultural orientations may predict women's experiences STTUC.

Based on the notions presented above the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: A direct positive relationship exists between female outperformers'collectivistic cultural orientation and the four components of STTUC.

Hypothesis 2: A direct negative relationship exists between male outperformers' collectivistic cultural orientation and four components of STTUC.

Hypothesis 3: A direct positive relationship exists between female outperformers' traditional gender role orientation and the four of STTUC.

Hypothesis4: A direct negative relationship exists between male outperformers' traditional gender role orientation and the four of STTUC.

In order to test the relationship between the four components of STTUC and the two predictors using multiple regressions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 5a: Collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional gender role orientation, explain variances in the outperformers' experiences of COP.

Hypothesis 5b: Collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional gender role orientation, explain variances in the outperformers' experiences of CS

Hypothesis 5c: Collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional gender role orientation, explain variances in the outperformers' experiences of CRO

Hypothesis 5d: Collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional gender role orientation, explain variances in the outperformers' experiences of PCT

3. Method

For the current study, it was deemed appropriate to use a quantitative cross-sectional survey approach in an attempt to answer the research questions posed and to empirically investigate the merit of the hypothesized relationships. The hypotheses were tested by conducting a series of statistical analyses which included: item analysis, correlation analyses, and multiple analyses.

3.1. Participants

Data was collected from 464 employees from a variety of organizations in Gaborone, Botswana. Approximately 59.9% were female. The age range was between 20 and 57 years ($M = 32.69$, $SD = 7.43$) and the sample was 100% black. The majority of the respondents had completed a Bachelor's degree (41.0%). The employee level of responsibility showed that 37.1% of the respondents were in non-supervisory/non-management positions, 27.5% were in supervisory positions, and 31.1% of respondents were in managerial positions. Fifty nine percept of the respondents had at last one child ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 1.26$, S.E. Mean = 0.60).

3.2. Measures

Measures included a demographic questionnaire, which had items/questions about the participants' gender, education, income, number of children, marital status, and age. In addition, the participants completed the following questionnaires:

    Collectivistic Cultural Orientation was measured using the Vertical Collectivism (VC) sub-scale of the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (ICS) by Triandis and Gelfand (1998). The overall ICS consists of 16 items designed to evaluate four cultural orientation dimensions (i.e. Horizontal Individualism (HI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), Vertical Individualism (VI), and Vertical Collectivism (VC)). For the purposes of this study, the four items of the VC sub-scale were used. This sub-scale was used because the items on the measure have been used in the past to provide evidence of the practicality of the constructs in Korea, a non-Western culture (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). Past research have shown that people scoring high in VC have also stressed authoritarianism ($r = .29$, $p < .005$), and interdependent construal ($r = .52$, $p < .001$: Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). The items were summed to form an index of Collectivistic Cultural Orientation.

Traditional Gender Role Orientation was assessed using four items from Larsen and Long (1988)'s Traditional–Egalitarian Sex Roles scale (TESR). This scales measures attitudes toward traditional–egalitarian beliefs about sex roles. Responses on this sub-scale were rated on a 4-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). The sub-scale score represents a continuum with low scores indicating an egalitarian attitude towards sex roles and high scores a more traditional attitude towards sex roles. The sub-scale has demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency through split-half reliabilities of .85 and .91 being when corrected by the Spearman-Brown's formula (Livingston and Judge, 2008). Support for the measure's validity has been provided by the findings that relationship between work interfering with family and guilt was more strongly positive for egalitarian individuals than traditional individuals, as measured by TESR (Livingston and Judge, 2008).

Perceived Comparison Threat (PCT) was measured with items from Exline *et al*.'s (2004) Anticipated Negative and Positive Peer Response sub-scales. Participants were instructed as follows– While thinking about the situation in which you outperformed a significant other, please respond to the following statements by ticking a number from 1 to 5 (1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *To a Small Extent*, 3 = *To a Moderate Extent*, 4 = *To a Great Extent*, 5 = *To an Extreme Extent*) to indicate whether the statement reflects how you think your significant other may have reacted or felt as a result of the outperformance. The questions were followed by statements such as: "Felt frustrated because you performed better." The items were summed together to form a perceived comparison threat index.

The items from the *Concern about Negative and Positive Peer Responses* (Exline *et al*., 2004) were used to measure the COP of the STTUC framework. Specifically, the participants were asked the following: While still thinking about the situation in which you outperformed your significant other, please respond to the following statements by ticking a number from 1 to 5 (1 = *Not at all Concerned*, 2 = *Unconcerned*, 3 = *Moderately Concerned*, 4 = *Concerned*, 4 = *Very Concerned*) to indicate how concerned you were that your significant other may have reacted in the following ways. The statement was followed by items such as "Felt embarrassed because you performed better" and "Felt frustrated because you performed better." COP index was formed by summing the items together.

Concern for the Self: Items from Ho and Zemaitis's (1981) Concern over Negative Consequences of Success Scale (CONCOSS), as identified by Hong and Caust (1985), were also used to measure the CS of the STTUC construct. Hong and Caust (1985) labelled this factor "*Anxiety over Hostile Reactions of Others".* Example of items in this scale included: "Become embarrassed if others compliment you on your work in presence of your significant other", and "Believed that successful people are often sad and lonely." CS index was formed by summing the al the items.

Concern about the Relationship with the Outperformed (CRO) was assessed with items from Ho and Zemaitis's (1981) Concern over Negative Consequences of Success Scale (CONCOSS), as identified by Hong and Caust (1985). Hong and Caust (1985) labelled this factor "Anxiety over the Negative Evaluation of Others.*"* An example of items on this sub-scale included: "Worry that you may become so knowledgeable that your significant other will not like you." These items were also summed to form a Concern about the Relationship with the Outperformed index.

3.3. Demographic data

Demographic data of the participants were also collected. Items in this section of the questionnaire requested the participant's gender, age, relationship status, and number of children. Data of the participants' and their partners' educational status and responsibility level at work was also gathered. The participants were further requested to indicate how long they have been formally employed, how long they have been working for the current employer, whether their partners/spouses earn more income than they do, and whether they were raised up in a city, town, or village.

3.4. Data collection procedure

First, ethics clearance for conducting research with human subjects was obtained from the University of Cape Town and from the Botswana Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs (MLHA). After obtaining ethics clearances, several organizations were sent letters requesting the employers to allow its employees to participate in the study and five organizations agreed to participate. Because English is the official language of Botswana, and most employees speak English, no translation was required. Data was collected using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed and then collected at a later date by the researcher and three research assistants.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables.

Table 1
Alpha Coefficients and Intercorrelations among the Study Variables (n = 464)

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PCT	17.64	8.65	.926	__					
2. COP	18.90	10.00	.933	.497**	__				
3. CS	15.76	6.52	. 877	.467**	.469**	__			
4. CRO	7.16	3.64	.857	.600**	.392**	.618**	__		
5. CCO	10.21	1.82	.681	.002	-.066	-.077	-.014	__	
6. TSRO	13.12	2.53	.763	.000	-.080	-.021	-.035	.495**	__

Note: PCT = Perceived Comparison Threat; COP = Concerned for Outperformed Person; CS = Concern for the Self; CRO = Concern for Relationship with Outperformed; CCO = Collectivistic Cultural Orientation; TSRO = Traditional Sex Role Orientation;

 * *p* < 0.05 level.

The results for the relationships between CCO and four dependent variables for the total sample, the male sub-sample, and the female sub-sample are presented in Tables 2. Likewise, summaries of relationships between TRSO and four dependent variables for the total sample, the male sub-sample, and the female sub-sample are also presented in Tables 2.

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between both CCO and the four Components of STTUC and TSRO the four Components of STTUC

	Collectivistic Cultural Orientation				Traditional Sex Role Orientation			
	TPCT	TCOP	TCS	TCRO	TPCT	TCOP	TCS	TCRO
Total Sample (*n* = 464)	.002	-.066	-.077	-.014	.000	-.080	-.021	-.035
Female (*n* = 278)	.028	-.051	-.043	-.004	.013	-.074	-.016	-.010
Male (*n* = 185)	-.074	-.102	**-.152***	-.045	.020	-.083	-.013	-.061

Note: PCT = Perceived Comparison Threat; COP = Concerned for Outperformed Person; CS = Concern for the Self; CRO = Concern for Relationship with Outperformed

** *p* < 0.01 level, * *p* < 0.05 level.

Except for the hypothesis suggesting a relationship between concern for the self (CS) and Collectivistic cultural orientation for the males, which showed a significant but small relationship (*r* = -.15, *p* < 0.05) all the null hypotheses for all the hypothesescould not be rejected. These results were therefore not consistent with the notions presented in this study.

The original plan was to conduct hierarchical multiple regression to assess whether collectivistic cultural orientation, traditional gender role orientation, explain variances in STTUC and its components after controlling for the effects of some of the demographic variables.

Because correlation analysis is the building block for Multiple Regression, such that the weaker the correlations the further the scores will fall to the regression line, it was anticipated that the hypothesis suggesting that the two variables explain variance in the STTUC scores might not be supported. Still, the hypotheses requiring hierarchical multiple regression analyses were tested, but as expected from the correlation results, the results were not supported. The next sections of this paper attempt to provide some theoretical explanations of why the results could have not been supported.

5. Discussions

Before discussing the findings, it is important to reiterate that the STTUC construct is at its infancy with just a handful of research published about the construct. The current study therefore extended the work of earlier

researchers empirically testing the relationships between cultural orientation and STTUC, and gender role orientation STTUC. Consequently, to the knowledge of the author, these empirical findings presented could be the first empirical findings regarding the proposed relationships.

The fact that the proposed hypotheses could not be supported makes the results of the findings of the current study quite remarkable. At a glance, this is concerning because as Gerber, Green, and Nickerson (2001) put it, "Editors and referees look askance at papers that report insignificant findings" (p. 385). Mills and Woo (n.d.) also made similar concerns that there is a general tendency of the researchers and the publishers to think that nonsignificant findings render a particular study insignificant. Mills and Woo further argued that the implications for nonsignificant findings can be just as meaningful as significant findings since they may affect scientific conclusions and impact directions for future research.

Others have advocated for an evaluation of why the nonsignificant findings are indeed nonsignificant. For example, Pagell, Kristal, and Blackmon (2009) suggested that while some manuscripts revealing nonsignificant findings might be flawed, some might betheoretically motivated and methodologically sound. This leads to the assumption that theoretically motivated and methodologically sound studies might be unpublished only because the results do not support accepted theory.

Peter (2010) summarized the arguments by stating:

> *"At the very least, negative results provide more information on which future scientific research can be based. For every study that didn't work or didn't produce positive results, there may very well be a planned study somewhere else in the academic world that can take this information on board to inform and direct the research that will be conducted. In my opinion, making these results hard to find hinders the scientific process in the end and could lead to inefficient research".*

In light of the above discussions, the following sections present some discussions regarding how the relationships might have not been confirmed. Theory linking the constructs of culture to general achievement has been plentiful in recent years. For example, specific to experiences of STTUC, Exline and Lobel (1999), Markus and Kitayama, (1991), and Triandis's (1994) studies suggest that cultural values, norms, beliefs, and traditions might regulate interpersonal relations and the likelihood that autonomous and/or interdependent achievements are punished or rewarded.

In the current study, the hypotheses linking cultural factors (i.e., both collectivistic cultural orientation and traditional gender role orientation) and STTUC were largely not confirmed at correlational level and regression level. While past research has discussed the role of culture in predicting STTUC (e.g., Exline and Lobel, 1999), the studies were insufficient because they just offered theoretical arguments without providing empirical findings to support the arguments. Generally, the outcomes of the current study seem to contradict the notions presented. Nonetheless, the findings may produce further insights into the understanding of culture and how it may relate to outperformance in relationships and organizational contexts.

First, while is it commonly agreed that working women with traditional gender role orientations may be likely to believe their true devotion should not be to their work, but to home (Judge and Livingston, 2008),

there are many factors that may influence gender role attitudes. This relationship between STTUC and one's cultural orientation and/or gender role orientationmay be affected by one's gender, work experience, education, marital status, tenure and many other variables. For example, the results of Willets-Bloom and Nock (1994) study revealed that even maternal employment has an effect on gender role attitudes such that the individual's age when his/her mother began working strongly predicted one's gender role attitudes regarding the suitability of mothers working.

Second, how cultural orientation and gender role orientation impact on STTUC experiences might also be influenced by the comparison domain; in the case of the current study, the workplace. For instance, the world of work has its own clear rules, guidelines and expectations which individuals must operate within. Jobs are assigned to focal individuals, and in many instances, employees may be forced to be individually accountable through individualized performance reviews. This setup may force individual accountability and may force individuals to adapt their traditional gender role orientation and collectivistic cultural orientation to work expectations. Therefore, the relationships between STTUC and the two cultural variables might have been altered by the expectations and accepted rules of the workplace.

Third, while achievement motivation can be viewed as primarily cognitive in nature, (i.e., attributing the sources of motivation to individual goals; Trumbull and Rothstein-Fisch, 2011), in the context of work, the motivation might also be linked to organizational goals.

A fourth potential interpretation of the unexpected result regarding the relationship between cultural variables and STTUC is that maybe collectivistic societies, outperformance might have been seen as sacrificing oneself for the family, and ensuring financial security for the family (Cheung and Halpern, 2010; Yang, Chen, Choi, and Zou, 2000). Such view of outperformance may buffer against one's STTUC experiences.

Cheung and Halpern (2010) also explained that while culture might prescribe certain expectations for gender roles and behaviors, there might differences within the culture in the way in which individuals play out the prescribed roles. Furthermore, it is also possible that one's occupational status may also influence both cultural orientation and gender role orientation. For example, as individual go up the corporate ladder, they may begin to get more acculturated into the organizational culture. Morahan, Rosen, Richman, and Gleason (2011) argued that existing organizational cultures that were established centuries ago by upper middle class, white Euro-American men. Consequently, for workers, acculturation in the form of cultural imperialism may be inevitable. Cultural imperialism can be loosely defined as a way of promoting the dominant culture in another (Alexander, 2003). In organizations, this commonly happens through formal induction programmes, training and development interventions, formal policies, and organizations rewarding acceptable behaviours and attitudes.

This acculturation may result in the coexistence of both the work culture and the national cultural within the same individual. Potential consequences of this acculturation may be what Nandi and Fernandez (1994) referred to as compartmentalization of family and working lives. According to this view, women may pursue employment outside the home and accept the principle of equal opportunity in the workplace, while still adhering to the traditional sex-roles within the home. Nandi and Fernandez further explain that women may use this coping and/or compensating strategies to minimize the trauma of adjustment. If this is the case, the

female employee may for example, expect the husband to be the head of her household, but adjust accordingly in situations where she has to manage male counterparts.

5.1. Limitations of the study

While the findings of this study revealed important information regarding the relationships between the two cultural variables and the experiences of STTUC, the study is not without limitations. First, because of cost and time constraints, a convenience sampling was used and this could limit generalization of the results to a broader population. Another design related limitation is the use of self-report instruments which could pose the problem of common method bias such as distortions and response biases (Spector, 1994).

Moreover and as far as it could be ascertained, this was the first attempt to empirically assess how some of the variables relate to the construct STTUC. Therefore, more studies are needed with for example context specific measures and/or with varying measures to really regard the findings pertaining to specific relationships as conclusive. For example, to comprehensively study the relationship between culture and STTUC, more measures (with both context specific and general culture measurement instruments) could be used. Furthermore, the following study only focused on the collectivism component of the collectivism-individualism dimension. Given the fact that culture is dynamic and complex, more might have been realized by tapping into the individualism component as well.

In addition, data was collected from a variety of organizations in Botswana; however, the study design did not control the variances of variables such as the type of industry and/or organization— thus variables may have covariated with the outcome variables.

5.2. Theoretical and practical implications

First and foremost, the results of this study are also informative, particularly because of the infancy of STTUC research. The broader society (i.e. nations, organizations, NGOs, managers, and executive coaches) all benefit from well-researched theoretical and empirical advances. For example, this study provided some initial empirical data on the specific relationships between CCO and STTUC, and TRSO and STTUC.

Furthermore, the fact that the relationships were not supported point to an important perspective on cross-cultural research. While most cross-cultural psychology studies compare cultures looking at the different dimensions of societal norms at a national level (Hofstede, 1980), culture is dynamic. Therefore, while culture may be prescriptive, there are differences in the way in which these expectations are played out within each culture (Cheung and Halpern, 2010) and across individuals in each culture.For example, Hoshino-Browne, Zanna, Spencer, Zanna, Kitayama, and Lackenbauer (2005) advised that, when examining cross-cultural aspects of psychology, it is important to carefully examine the role of culture— looking at both the obvious, and at culture's deeper levels as well.

Accordingly, researchers may need to conceptualize their understanding of the implications of culture for performance related outcomes, particularly, performance related distress. The findings of this study and theoretical claims relating culture to performance related distressmay alsoprompt questions such as: What

factors can predict STTUC experiences? What is the best way of studying the relationship between culture and performance related distresses? Future research may benefit by answering these questions.

6. Recommendations for future research

It is evident that empirical research into STTUC is only just crystallizing. Studies have consistently shown that outperformance may constitute a challenge for some individuals with the STTUC framework offering insights into the reasons for this. It is, therefore, recommended that other researchers continue to investigate the STTUC construct within organizational contexts to elevate the importance of the STTUC construct within organizations.

It was indicated in preceding sections that many researchers have been theoretically arguing that cultural orientations may relate or STTUC reactions without offering concrete empirical evidence. The current study made the first steps to empirically test the links between the cultural variables and experiences of STTUC, and mostly, nonsignificant findings were revealed. While the current data did not provide support for the hypotheses resulting from the theoretical arguments, and because of the complex nature of culture, more research is still needed to render the current findings conclusive as the research output on this link is still too limited and premature to suggest that the relationships between the two cultural variables and experiences of STTUC may not exist.

The second recommendation is still related to the first one. While it could be argued that the current study used a more comprehensive measure of STTUC, the construct has been conceptually and empirically underdeveloped. Therefore more and maybe different studies using varying measures of STTUC might be required to fully capture the complex STTUC process.

Furthermore, the generalizability of the present results to other populations needs to be determined. Researchers could attempt to replicate the present findings with samples from other countries and/or variety of cultural backgrounds. For example, because the participants in the present samples were primarily black employees from Botswana, this made it difficult to assess the potential interaction between participants' cultural backgrounds and their experiences of STTUC.

Finally, future studies should also consider using different research methods and designs including but not limited to experimentally designed studies, qualitative studies, and even longitudinal studies. Such designs may expand our understanding of how cultural variables may relate to the experiences of performance related distresses.

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