Organizational citizenship behavior in a Japanese organization: The effects of job involvement, organizational commitment, and collectivism

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Abstract

This article investigates the effects of job involvement, affective organizational commitment, and collectivism on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) using data collected from 131 professors and clerical workers in a private Japanese university. Results show that job involvement had a significantly positive relationship on civic virtue and helping behavior, and affective organizational commitment had a significantly positive effect on helping behavior and sportsmanship. Collectivism also positively influenced civic virtue and helping behavior. In addition, the effect of affective organizational commitment on civic virtue was moderated by collectivism so that affective organizational commitment had a stronger effect when collectivism was weak than when collectivism was strong.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, job involvement, affective organizational commitment, collectivism, Japanese organization

Organizational Citizenship, Page 1

INTRODUCTION

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been considered to be one of the most important factors influencing organizational effectiveness (Organ, Podsakoff & MacKenzie 2006). OCB research was initiated by Western researchers, but now many Asian researchers, in particular Chinese researchers, have a strong interest in OCB in their countries. Compared with OCB research in other Asian countries, there is little research on OCB in Japanese organizations. However, as Dennis Organ, the first to foresee OCB, states in the Japanese version of a book he coauthored (Organ et al. 2006), he was inspired to examine OCB when he read the literature on Japanese management such as Ouchi (1980). Organ thought the great success of Japanese organizations in the 1960s and 1970s was due to their employees' volunteer behavior toward their organizations. He also thought it would be important to inform American organizations of the secret of this success.

One reason for the lag in OCB research in Japan as compared to other Asian countries is that Japanese employees do not necessarily view the boundary between their job and extrajob behaviors as definitive and important (Iwata 1978). Particularly in the collectivistic Japanese society, employees view their organizations to some degree as family. Thus, the distinction between where to belong and where not to belong is more important than the distinction between what they formally have to do and what they do not have to do. That is to say, the employees have a tendency to regard whatever is done for an organization as a formal obligation. This tendency might discourage Japanese researchers from studying OCB because the distinction between a formal job and OCB is meaningless to them. However, as demonstrated by Morrison (1994), this problem is not only present in Japanese OCB but is true to some degree in all business cultures that have been analyzed. Moreover, even if Japanese employees have a tendency to think that the scope of their jobs is broad and ambiguous, there is still a difference in the eagerness and earnestness which they apply OCBlike behavior. It is important to investigate the reasons behind this for the sake of OCB research because this difference in employees' behavior is certainly considered to be one of the success factors of organizations, regardless of any cultural business differences.

Western and Asian Organizational Behavior researchers have been interested in the relationships between employees' OCB and their individual attitudinal or belief factors as antecedents of their OCB. Employees' attitudes or beliefs associated with their work performance vary depending on the objects or specificity of the objects of their concern. In this study, we investigate the effects of job involvement, affective organizational commitment, and collectivism on OCB using data collected from a private Japanese university.

THE EFFECT OF THREE ANTECEDENTS ON OCB

Job Involvement

Although job involvement is one of the most basic job-related attitudes in organizational research, meta-analyses revealed that there was no relationship, or at most a weak relationship, between job involvement and job performance (Brown 1996). These results are understandable because task performance is usually determined not by how employees feel about their jobs, but by their skill and work-process technology (Organ 1977). It has been reasonably inferred that employees' job involvement influences their more discretionary extra-role behaviors like OCB. Some research has focused on this relationship.

Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin, and Lord (2002) is a pioneering work that investigated the relationship between job involvement and OCB. They indicated that job involvement has significantly positive effects on four of Organ's (1988) five forms. Although courtesy was

not directly influenced by job involvement, gender had a mediating effect on the relationship between job involvement and courtesy.

Recently, Cohen (2006), Dimitriades (2007), Chughtai (2008), and Chen and Chiu (2009) also empirically analyzed the effect of job involvement on OCB using data from employees in various countries. Although only Cohen (2006) found no significant effect of job involvement on OCB, other researchers demonstrated a significant positive influence of job involvement on some dimensions of OCB. Dimitriades (2007) found that the service climate of frontline Greek employees had a positive effect on their customer-oriented OCB, and this effect was partially mediated by their job involvement. Chughtai (2008) found that job involvement had a positive effect on OCB even after controlling for some demographic factors. Finally, Chen and Chiu (2009) found that job involvement mediated the effect of job characteristics on OCB.

Affective Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been conceptualized as composed of affective, continuance, and normative commitments (Meyer & Allen 1984; Allen & Meyer 1990). Of these three components, affective organizational commitment, which was defined as "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin & Jackson 1989: 152), is considered to be the most important form that has an impact on employees' behavior within their organizations. Employees tend to accomplish more for their organizations in a positive manner when they have a strong emotional attachment to their organizations; therefore, their high affective organizational commitment is expected to have a positive effect on their work behaviors, including OCB.

In fact, even if confined to Asian studies, many of these studies have revealed a positive relationship between affective organizational commitment and OCB (Chen & Francesco 2003; Chughtai 2008; Cohen 2006; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi 2002; Kwantes 2003; Van Dyne & Ang 1998). For example, Chen and Francesco (2003) revealed a significantly positive effect of affective organizational commitment on altruism and general compliance, using a sample of Chinese employees. Chughtai (2008) also confirmed the positive relationship between affective organizational commitment and the composite measure of OCB, using data collected from Pakistani faculty members. Van Dyne and Ang (1998) demonstrated the positive effect of affective organizational commitment on the helping measure, using a Singaporean sample. A similar positive relationship between affective organizational commitment and OCB was found by research that used samples from the following western Asian countries: Israel (Cohen 2006), Omen (Kuehn and Al-Busaidi 2002), and India (Kwantes 2003). Although it was not limited to Asian research, the meta-analysis by Organ and Ryan (1995) on the effects of the two organizational commitments revealed that affective organizational commitment had a positive effect on altruism and general compliance.

Collectivism

Although collectivism used to be a cultural dimension that differentiated between national cultures (Hofstede 1984), currently it is also used to measure people's belief or value that "collective or group interests should take precedence over individual self-interest" (Van Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham & Cummings 2000: 5). It is not a specific job-related factor but a general belief that the collective interest takes priority over individual interests in society. In contrast to individualists, collectivists are willing to sacrifice their individual benefits for their own group because they believe that the group will finally be able to give them more benefit than what they would get by pursuing their self-interest. Therefore,

according to Moorman and Blakely (1995: 129), "(s)ince collectivists have the goal of promoting the welfare of the group, it makes sense that (individualism-collectivism) would be related behaviors such as OCBs which greatly aid that goal".

Collectivists are considered to exhibit more OCB than individualists. In fact, several empirical studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between collectivism and OCB. Moorman and Blakely (1995) showed, that collectivistic values and norms had a significantly positive effect on several dimensions of OCB. In particular, the positive effects of collectivistic values on interpersonal helping, individual initiative, and loyal boosterism, and the positive effect of collectivistic norms on interpersonal helping were still significant even after controlling for a method factor and procedural justice. Cohen (2006) demonstrated that individualism-collectivism had a significant effect on impersonal aspects of OCB dimensions (which he called "organizational OCB") after incorporating multiple commitments. Cohen and Avrahami (2006) also identified a similar positive effect of collectivism on OCB. Collectivists have a stronger feeling of belonging to their organization and therefore have a higher commitment to it. Van Dyne et al. (2000) revealed not only a positive relationship between job involvement and OCB, but also showed that this relationship was fully mediated by organizational-based self-efficacy (OBSE) in the relationship between collectivism and OCB.

HYPOTHESES

From the fact that the results of many studies have been rather consistent, job involvement is considered to be a universal antecedent of OCB, and its effect on OCB should be observed to be similarly positive even when using data from Japanese employees. Most large Japanese organizations have a job rotation system that makes their employees change their jobs periodically to help them gain a wider perspective and maintain various human relations in their workplaces. However, some previous research has shown no significant correlation between job tenure and job involvement (Allen, Russell, Poteet & Robbins 1999; Gould & Penley 1985; Igbaria, Parasuraman & Badawy 1994), and this kind of Japanese system is not expected to directly influence the effects of job involvement, or to mediate the relationship between job involvement and OCB. Therefore, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Job involvement will have a positive effect on OCB.

Secondly, we address the effect of affective organizational commitment. As we discussed, the results of previous research almost consistently showed a positive effect of affective organizational commitment on OCB. Although there has been no OCB study that addressed the effect of affective organizational commitment on OCB using data collected from Japanese employees, we could expect affective organizational commitment to have a similar, positive effect on OCB even when using this sample. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Affective organizational commitment will have a positive effect on OCB.

Next, we hypothesize the effect of collectivism on OCB. As we discussed previously, employees' tendency toward collectivism is considered to have a positive effect on their OCB. It is often said that Japan is a collectivist country. However, this does mean all Japanese people have a high tendency toward collectivism. The degree of collectivism differs from person to person in a collectivist country. Consequently, the effect of collectivism on OCB

that is observed when a Japanese sample is examined is expected to be similar to its effect on OCB when a Western sample is examined. Therefore, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Collectivism will have a positive effect on OCB.

Although affective organizational commitment and collectivism are two basic attitudes toward or belief in collectives, they are different from each other in that the former is an attitude toward the specific organization that employees currently work for and the latter is a general belief in the priority of the collective over the individual. Each of them is expected to have a distinct effect on OCB. However, a moderating effect between them is also expected. When employees have little affective organizational commitment to their organization, they might be willing to contribute to their organization if they have high collectivism. On the other hand, if employees have a strong tendency toward individualism, they want to do almost anything for their organization if they have a strong positive attachment to it. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between affective organizational commitment and OCB will be moderated by collectivism such that the relationship between them will be more strongly positive for weak collectivistic employees whose collectivism is weak than for strong collectivistic employees.

RESEARCH METHODS

Participants

The data were collected from employees at a private university (a juridical person) in Tokyo, Japan. The entire juridical person comprises several independent schools, from an elementary school to a graduate school, on the same campus. It employs 221 clerical workers and 234 university professors (as well as teachers from other schools). First we asked four university deans and a clerical manager to allow us to distribute the questionnaires and to ask professors and clerical workers to answer them. We used an internal mailing system to collect the questionnaires from clerical workers. We also made special mailing boxes and put them in the rooms where many professors would gather to collect the questionnaires from professors. We sent two emails to all of the clerical workers and professors at the proper time to ask and encourage them to answer the questionnaires and to send them back to us.

The actual sample consisted of 131 employees (84 clerical workers and 47 university professors). The response rate of the professors was relatively low, partly because most of them were not used to answering questionnaires. Of all the participants, 69 persons were male and 59 persons were female (3 persons were unknown). Forty-eight persons were less than 40 years old and 79 persons were 40 or more than 40 years old (4 persons were unknown). Except for demographic variables, participants were asked to rate each item using an ordinary Likert 7-point scale. All of the items originally written in English were translated to Japanese by the authors, and independent bilingual professors confirmed the appropriateness of the translated sentences.

Measures

Job involvement. Job involvement was measured by the 9-item scale. This scale was developed and verified by Yoshimura (2007) using a sample from Japanese workers in various Japanese work settings. This scale is comprehensive and includes affective, cognitive,

and behavioral elements of job involvement. Exemplary items were; "I am interested in my job," "What is most important to me is related to my job," and, "I often think about how to do my job even when leaving the office."

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment was measured using the 6-item scale developed in Meyer and Allen (1984) and Meyer et al. (1989). This scale is known as a standard organizational commitment scale and has been used by many researchers.

Collectivism. The scale developed by Earley (1993) was translated into Japanese and used to measure collectivism. Earley (1993) first proposed a 10-item scale but later dropped two items because they did not load on a first factor. We initially used his remaining 8-item scale. However, we dropped an additional two items after our analysis because they did not have high correlations to the other items.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Many OCB researchers have proposed different forms or measures of OCB (LePine, Erez, & Johnson 2002; Organ et al. 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach 2000). Organ (1988) proposed the most basic and popular five forms, for which scales were later developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). Subsequently, when Organ (1990) expanded the domain of OCB by adding Cheerleading and Peacemaking to his original five forms, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) combined these original seven dimensions into three dimensions of Helping Behavior, Civic Virtue, and Sportsmanship, based on the results of their confirmatory factor analysis. These three forms are more appropriate for studying OCB in a Japanese organization because behaviors that improve human relationships, such as cheerleading and peacemaking, are quite important in Japanese society, where harmonious relationships between people are viewed as critical.

OCB ratings are typically made by someone (usually a manager or supervisor) who knows participants' daily behaviors in their workplaces, in order to avoid the common method variance (Organ et al. 2006). However, Japanese people usually have a strong sense of differentiating between "outsiders and insiders." Managers tend to think their subordinates are "insiders" whom they have to protect from "outsiders" like researchers. They usually hesitate to tell the entire truth about "insiders" to "outsiders." In other words, the unique Japanese view of privacy encourages the Japanese to say only tatemae (what one is supposed to feel or do) and hide honne (what one actually feels or does) about "insiders" to "outsiders" (Capurro 2006; Mehri 2006). Therefore, instead of asking their managers, we asked the participants themselves to rate the importance of each OCB behavior in their regular work setting. We assumed that they would rate the behaviors they frequently do higher than the behaviors they never or seldom do based on the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957). OCB were originally collected using Podsakoff and MacKenzie's (1994) items of civic virtue (3 items), helping behaviors (7 items), and sportsmanship (4 items). We changed their original sentences in order to ask participants to rate the importance of their own OCBs.

Demography: Participants were also asked to report their job (professors = 1, clerical workers = 2), gender (male = 1, female = 2) and age (less than 40 = 1, or 40 or more than 40 = 2). These data were controlled for in order to discern the effects of the factors we are interested in.

Analytic Strategy

For each of the categories, all the responses to items were averaged to form a composite measure. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. In the regression analysis, demographic factors such as job, gender, and age were entered in Step 1 to control for the effects of those variables. Next, job involvement, affective

organizational commitment, and collectivism were entered in Step 2 to examine their distinct contributions to predicting OCB. Finally, the product of affective commitment and collectivism was entered in Step 3 to confirm the moderating effect of age.

RESULTS

Correlations

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha) and correlations are reported in Table 1. The Cronbach's Alpha for each of the variables was higher than the conventional standard value (0.7). Job category (professor or clerical worker) was significantly and positively related to job involvement and affective organizational commitment, suggesting that clerical workers were more involved in their jobs and attached to their organization than professors were. In contrast, job category had a significantly negative correlation with collectivism, which means professors were more collectivistic than clerical workers. Gender had a significantly negative correlation with job involvement and affective organizational commitment, although it had a positive correlation with collectivism. This means men had higher job involvement and affective organizational commitment, but women were more collectivistic. The correlation between age and affective organizational commitment was significantly positive, meaning that older employees generally had higher affective organizational commitment than younger employees.

The significant positive correlations between job category and job involvement were unexpected. The values indicated that clerical workers had higher job involvement than professors. Typically, while clerical workers change their jobs on a rather routine basis, professionals like university professors are not subject to a job rotation system in an organization but are expected to continue to engage their professional jobs. Therefore, professors were expected to have higher job involvement than clerical workers. It is not clear whether or not this is a universal result. One possibility is that it is attributed to the method of data collection. Because employees had a choice whether or not to respond to the questionnaire, perhaps only the clerical workers who originally had higher job involvement wanted to cooperate with the authors.

Table 1 also demonstrates the relationships between categories of OCB, and between OCB and its antecedents. First, all correlations between OCB categories were significantly positive. Job involvement and affective organizational commitment had significantly positive correlations with all categories of OCB, as was expected. Finally, the only OCB categories which collectivism had significantly positive correlations were civic virtue and helping behavior.

Tests of hypotheses

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis are summarized in Table 2. According to Step 3 in Table 2, job involvement positively influenced civic virtue ($\beta = 0.540$, p < 0.01) and helping behavior ($\beta = 0.217$, p < 0.05), but not sportsmanship ($\beta = 0.160$, n.s.), after controlling for demographic variables. This suggests that Hypothesis 1 is partially supported. The effect of affective organizational commitment was significantly positive on helping behavior ($\beta = 0.382$, p < 0.01) and sportsmanship ($\beta = 0.353$, p < 0.01), but not civic virtue ($\beta = 146$, n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is also partially supported. As for collectivism, it had a significant relationship to civic virtue ($\beta = 0.146$, p < 0.1) and helping behavior ($\beta = 0.258$, p < 0.01), but not sportsmanship ($\beta = -0.102$, n.s.), suggesting that Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. Hypothesis 4 proposed that collectivism had a moderating effect on the relationship between affective organizational commitment and OCB. This hypothesis was tested in Step 3 by examining the significance of the product of collectivism and affective organizational commitment. Results tentatively show that collectivism had a moderating effect on the relationship between affective organizational commitment and civic virtue ($\beta = -0.149$, p < 0.1). Therefore, affective organizational commitment had a stronger effect on civic virtue when employees' collectivism was weak than when it was strong. Unfortunately, moderating effects of collectivism on other OCB categories were not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was also only partially supported.

DISCUSSION

This research revealed that OCB was influenced by individual factors in a way that was similar to the findings of past research, even when data collected from Japanese employees was used. First, job involvement was related to civic virtue and helping behavior. Job involvement included positive behavior orientation toward improving job performance. Attending meetings or conferences as an act of civic virtue is a typical way to get information necessary to improve one's job performance. Positive attitude towards one's job is also considered to interact with positive attitudes towards coworkers, particularly in a work environment like a Japanese organization, which emphasizes harmonious human relationships as a factor that is necessary for doing one's job effectively and efficiently. Although the positive relationship between job involvement and sportsmanship was also expected, because gentle behaviors like sportsmanship could also contribute to job performance, we did not find a significant relationship between behavioral job involvement and sportsmanship. We surmise that this was at least partly because the current sportsmanship scale is not very relevant to Japanese employees as a measure of sportsmanship, as will be discussed later.

Second, this research showed that affective organizational commitment had a significantly positive effect on helping behavior and sportsmanship. In a Japanese organization, collectivism also positively affected not only civic virtue, but also helping behavior. This means that Japanese employees' orientation towards the collective or towards their organization exhibits not only OCB-O (OCB for organization) but also OCB-I (OCB for individual) (Williams & Anderson 1991). Cohen (2006) showed that individualismcollectivism of culture dimensions significantly influenced impersonal OCB (which he called "organizational OCB"), but not "altruism OCB," in his final equation. Cohen regarded altruism OCB as "(o)utcomes that are less work specific and more general in their nature" (Cohen 2006: 116), and those behaviors "seem to be less affected by culture" (Cohen 2006: 116). In contrast, Japanese employees tend to emphasize human relationships with others who are close to them in a small department more than their relationship with the organization as a whole. This tendency might be similar to the Chinese way of thinking, as Hui et al. (2004: 233) described it, "(t)he Chinese are expected to relate to an organization through the particular relationships that exist between individuals and their supervisors. Hence, traditional Chinese people tend to approach organizations 'thinking interpersonally', in contrast to the Western view of the employment relationship that is based upon 'thinking organizationally' ", except for the fact that the Japanese emphasize not only the relationship with their supervisor, but also the relationship with their peers in a small world that is sometimes called Seken (Abe 1995, 2004; Capurro 2005).

Finally, we assumed there was a moderating relationship between affective organizational commitment and collectivism because these two attitudes were considered to alternately encourage discretionary behavior for the collective. However, from the fact that this relationship was not evident in two out of three regression models, this moderating effect

was rather weak, if at all, and the two attitude factors might function independently of each other in many cases.

The results of this paper indicate the importance of focusing on employees' individual attitudes toward their jobs and their organization as the antecedents of OCB in a Japanese social context. As was described, OCB research has not received much attention so far, either academically or practically, probably because of the ambiguous boundary between a formal job and extra-job behaviors like OCB in the collectivistic Japanese society. However, this study revealed that individual attitudinal differences still influence OCB beyond the general effect of national culture of Japan. This empirical result not only encourages researchers to do more OCB research in Japanese organizations, but also motivates practitioners to pay attention to those employees' individual factors in order to maximize their contributions to their organization's effectiveness.

However, there are some drawbacks to this study that should be solved in future studies. First, comparing the three results of the hierarchical regression analysis, the model for sportsmanship had weaker explanatory power than the other two models. We think this result might be partly due to how Japanese employees' sportsmanship was measured. All of the traditional sportsmanship items seemed to the Japanese to be virtues they are supposed to answer ethically regardless of their actual behaviors. For example, only a few Japanese negate the importance of "wasting a lot of time on trivial matters," one of the typical sportsmanship items, whatever effort they may actually make to avoid that tendency in an actual work environment. This consideration might have made them respond to the sportsmanship items differently from the way they responded to other OCB items.

Second, this study collected data from only one private university. Although a university also meets the basic requirements for an organization, its characteristics are quite different from those of business organizations. In particular, many Japanese universities do not have severe performance appraisal systems, and they allow their employees to voluntarily judge whether their behaviors are appropriate. The atmosphere in Japanese universities may have some impact on employees' discretionary behaviors and their rating of those behaviors.

This paper focused on the relationships between OCB and three of its individual antecedents, using data from Japanese employees. The empirical research was based on the framework of Western countries' and other Asian countries' OCB research by adopting existing Western-typed OCB dimensions and the antecedents that were examined by previous studies. Although Japanese management is often described as unique even among Asian countries, this study showed that this research framework is still effective in the Japanese context.

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Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations of the Measures

	М	Std Dev	Job Category	Gender	Age	Job Involvement	Affective Organizational Commitment	Collectivism	Civic Virtue	Helping Behavior	Sports- manship
Job Category	1.356	.481	_								
Gender	1.417	.500	301 **	—							
Age	1.594	.492	.087	239 **	_						
Job Involvement	4.670	1.188	.454 **	213 *	.126	(0.90)					
Affective											
Organizational	4.684	1.148	.311 **	299 **	-265 **	.438 **	(0.83)				
Commitment						D)					
Collectivism	4.350	.728	242 **	.184 *	051	171	.172	(0.73)			
Civic Virtue	4.814	1.084	.033	019	022	.447 **	.356 **	.200 **	(0.77)		
Helping Behavior	5.169	.721	166	.214 *	002	.187 *	.311 **	.406 **	.487 **	(0.79)	
Sportsmanship	4.994	1.008	.185 *	067	.232 **	.339 **	.398 **	062	.230 **	.263 **	(0.77)

D

N = 131, *: p < .05, **: p < .01. Coefficient Alphas are reported along the diagonal.

Organizational Citizenship, Page 13

Table 2

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Step	Independent Variables	(Civic Virtue		Н	elping Behavior		Sportsmanship			
		β	∠F	$\angle \mathbb{R}^2$	β	∠F	$\angle \mathbb{R}^2$	β	∠F	$\angle \mathbf{R}^2$	
	Job	.031			070			.196 **			
1	Gender	017	.060	.002	.192	1.731	.045	.052	3.743**	.093	
	Age	022			.030			.230 **			
	Job	216 *			180 **			.030			
	Gender	.032			.228 ***			.114			
	Age	086			069			.145			
2	Job Involvement	.530 **			.216 **			.161			
	Affective Organizational Commitment	.198 **	19.127***	.346	.388 ***	19.950***	.339	.337 ***	6.084***	.133	
	Collectivism	.144			.258 **			113			
3	Job	257 **			184 **			.039			
	Gender	.007			.225 ***			.119			
	Age	109			072			.148			
	Job Involvement	.540 ***			.217 **			.160			
	Affective Organizational Commitment	.146			.382 ***			.353 ***			
	Collectivism	.146 *	2.846*	.017	.258 ***	.036	.000	117	0.102	.001	
	Affective Organizational Commitment * Collectivism	149 *			016			.033			

N=131,*:p<.1,**:p<.05,***:p<.001