

The effect of leadership styles, rank, and seniority on affective organizational commitment

A comparative study of US and Korean employees

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to develop and empirically test a conceptual model based on the culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory to comprehend differences in the relationships between consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles and affective organizational commitment for US and Korean employees. Further, the authors investigate how rank and seniority moderate the relationships between the two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment in both countries.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors developed and conducted a cross-sectional survey in the USA and Korea. To test the hypotheses that perform a series of hierarchical regression analyses.

Findings – Survey results from 452 US and Korean employees show that the positive relationship between consideration leadership (i.e. people-oriented leadership) and affective organizational commitment was stronger among US employees than Korean employees. Initiating structure leadership (i.e. task-oriented leadership) was negatively related to affective organizational commitment in the USA, whereas this relationship was positive in South Korea (henceforth Korea). Further, these relationships were moderated by rank and seniority in Korea, but not in the USA. Specifically, the positive relationship between consideration leadership and affective organizational commitment was stronger when Korean employee's rank was higher and seniority was shorter.

Originality/value – The comparative nature of the study enables to identify differences in the effects of leadership styles on affective organizational commitment across countries and thus helps to better understand employees from different cultures. Furthermore, the authors demonstrate the differential effects of demographic variables such as rank and seniority in the relationships of leadership styles and affective organizational commitment. The findings provide important managerial recommendations for how managers can better lead US and Korean employees.

Keywords Korea, Affective organizational commitment, Leadership style, USA, Seniority, Rank

Paper type Research paper



Leadership styles, expected leadership behavior, and leader characteristics vary across countries (Chen and Li, 2013; House *et al.*, 2004). In order to maintain employees' affective organizational commitment in today's global work environment, managers of

multinational corporations need to understand the preferred leadership styles in different countries (House *et al.*, 2004). Affective organizational commitment is important because it is one of the strongest predictors of employee turnover and job performance (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Wasti, 2008). As many theorists have identified leadership as one of the key contributing antecedents influencing employees' attachment to the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2010; Meyer and Allen, 1997), the goal of this study is to determine how leaders can manage employees across countries more effectively by increasing affective organizational commitment.

We focus on two influential leadership styles, consideration, and initiating structure, to investigate cross-cultural relationships between leadership styles and employees' affective organizational commitment. Past research has found that consideration leadership (i.e. being friendly, engaging, and sociable, treating employees as equal, and looking out for their welfare) and initiating structure leadership styles (i.e. assigning tasks, specifying procedures, planning work, and maintaining definite standards of performance) influence followers' organizational commitment (Dale and Fox, 2008; Lok and Crawford, 2004). Unfortunately, these two leadership styles have received little attention in current leadership research over past decades (Keller, 2006), even though they have been found to be important to enhance followers' attitudes and behaviors in recent meta-analytic reviews (Piccolo *et al.*, 2012). Judge *et al.*'s (2004) study showed that both consideration and initiating structure have critical main effects on numerous fundamental indicators of effective leadership such as motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Moreover, Judge *et al.* (2004) emphasize that there should be a renewed interest in these two leadership styles, as important pieces in the leadership puzzle, with more recent theorizing. For example, they recommend implicit leadership theory (ILT) for explaining consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles. After Judge *et al.*'s (2004) study of "the forgotten one" of consideration and initiating structure, many cross-cultural researchers have focussed on the effects of the two leadership styles on job satisfaction and leader effectiveness (Piccolo *et al.*, 2012), performance (Rowold, 2010), organizational citizenship behavior (Euwema *et al.*, 2007), and team cohesiveness (Wendt *et al.*, 2009). However, little empirical research has explored the contextual conditions under which the relationships between these two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment are more or less effective in cross-cultural settings (Hoffman and Shipper, 2012). Accordingly, the present study follows this line of thought by first examining whether cultural boundary conditions influence the relationship between these two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment among US and Korean employees, and then examining what those influences are. This study focusses on the USA and Korea because the cultures of these countries differ greatly. For instance, the USA, in sharp contrast to Korea, is characterized as a low power distance culture (Hofstede, 2001).

The present study intends to make several contributions to the existing literature. First, drawing on the culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory (ILT, CLT) (House *et al.*, 2004; Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010) based on ILT (Lord and Maher, 1991), this study examines the cultural boundary conditions of leadership effectiveness, focussing on consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles. We theorize and empirically test whether host-country differences moderate the relationship between leadership styles and employees' commitment. Second, even though there has been a call for renewed attention on consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles (Judge *et al.*, 2004; Piccolo *et al.*, 2012), the majority of cross-cultural leadership research has paid little attention to the consequences of different leadership styles on organizational

effectiveness, such as affective organizational commitment (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2007). Cross-cultural researchers have argued that certain leadership styles would be universal or contingent across Western and Eastern countries (Dorfman *et al.*, 1997; Hoffman and Shipper, 2012; Misumi and Peterson, 1985; Sinha, 1980). Adopting the consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles in a comparative cross-country study, as we do herein, can increase our understanding of the universal or contingent effects of leadership styles on organizational effectiveness. Third, few studies have investigated the moderating effects of demographic variables in the relationship between these two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment. Drawing from the connectionist model of leadership perception (Brown and Lord, 2001; Lord *et al.*, 2001), this study investigates the role of two hierarchy-related demographic variables: rank and seniority (i.e. tenure). We focussed on rank and seniority as moderators as such factors are important in Confucian cultures, such as Korea, China, and Japan (Chen, 1995; Yang, 2006) and how these two produce different preferences to leadership styles, which in turn enhances affective organizational commitment, specifically in Korea.

Affective organizational commitment

Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). It is one of the facets of organizational commitment, the others facets being continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Among these three facets, affective commitment has received the most attention (Wasti, 2003) because of its strong association with desirable individual and organizational outcomes, such as performance, OCB, and turnover (e.g. Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Wasti, 2003). We focus on affective organizational commitment for the following reasons. First, Lavelle *et al.* (2009) argue that affective commitment has greater reliability and validity among three dimensions of organizational commitment. Second, leadership research has indicated that supervisors' leadership styles influence the development of the affective commitment of employees (e.g. Bycio *et al.*, 1995; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2010; Herold *et al.*, 2008; Kim and Kim, 2015). However, consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles have seldom been theoretically and empirically tested, even though past studies have shown that these leadership behaviors are critical factors for employees' commitment (Yukl, 1998). Third, researchers have called for cross-cultural research which shows how leadership styles and each facet of commitment vary across cultures (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). In line with these arguments, we focus on affective commitment in this study and how it is influenced by consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles across and within cultures.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Research on leadership in cross-cultural settings has received increasing attention in recent years (House *et al.*, 2004; Wendt *et al.*, 2009). Drawing upon previous studies of leadership styles, affective organizational commitment, and cross-cultural research, we develop and test an integrated model. We propose that the relationship between leadership styles and affective organizational commitment will be influenced by differences in culture and associated differences in the importance of certain demographic variables across countries. Our theoretical model builds on the ILT, which is based on the assumption that leadership is in the "eye of the beholder." ILT has been used to explain leadership attributions and perceptions (e.g. Offermann *et al.*, 1994;

Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010). Drawing from the information process perspective, it suggests that perceptions of leadership are based on hierarchically structured cognitive prototypes that help individuals interpret leadership styles that are compatible with their own values and norms (Lord *et al.*, 1984). That is, the more a person perceives a leadership style as being similar to his or her prototype of an effective leader, the more positively he or she should respond and in a more accepting manner to that leader's style. In the GLOBE project (House *et al.*, 2004), the concept of individualized ILT is extended into a cultural-level theory, labeled CLT. CLT argues that each individual's implicit beliefs, convictions, and assumptions concerning attributes and behaviors are affected by their own culture. This is because cultures shape people's fundamental ways of collecting, storing, organizing, and processing information about a leader (Shaw, 1990).

Building upon CLT, we argue that culture plays a strong role in leadership prototypes (Ashkanasy *et al.*, 2002; Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999; Gerstner and Day, 1994; Lord and Maher, 1991). Therefore, different cultures will produce different preferences for leadership prototypes, eventually influencing employees' affective organizational commitment. Our integrated model includes two leadership styles: consideration (i.e. people-oriented), and initiating structure (i.e. task-oriented; Stogdill, 1963). We focus on these two leadership styles because they have proven to be among the most robust of leadership concepts (Fleishman, 1995; Judge *et al.*, 2004), yet have received relatively little attention in comparative leadership research. Moreover, CLT argues that as characteristics of work at different hierarchical levels vary, it is likely that followers' expectations and preferences toward their leaders also vary depending on those different levels (Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999; Lord and Maher, 1991). Therefore, drawing from the connectionist model of leadership perception (Brown and Lord, 2001; Lord *et al.*, 2001), we include hierarchy-related demographic variables of followers, i.e. rank and seniority, to examine how CLTs vary according to these hierarchical variables. According to the connectionist model, leader prototypes are influenced not only by cultures but also by various factors such as task types, leader attributes, and followers attributes (Lord *et al.*, 2001). Based on this perspective, we argue that the hierarchy-related variables of rank and seniority, which are closely related to Confucianism in Korea (Chen, 1995), may also have impacts on preference toward leadership styles and its effectiveness. The relationships among the two leadership styles, the two demographic variables, and affective commitment between the USA and Korea are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Leadership styles

A supervisor has the essential role of creating and facilitating environments that the subordinates need for performing their organizational roles. Therefore, understanding how leadership styles can affect employees' behavior is critical for their organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Piccolo *et al.*, 2012). Consideration leadership refers to the degree to which the leader creates a supportive environment of psychological support, warmth, and helpfulness by doing such things as expressing appreciation and support, treating individuals as equal, and looking out for their welfare (Bass, 1990). For example, a leader who exhibits a high level of consideration leadership is friendly, engaging, and sociable, so it is often called a people- or a relationship-oriented leadership style (House, 1971; Lambert *et al.*, 2012). Initiating structure leadership refers to the degree to which a supervisor defines his/her role and the roles of subordinates toward the attainment of the group's goals (Stogdill, 1963).

For example, a supervisor assigns tasks, specifies procedures, plans and schedules work, communicates the importance of meeting deadlines, and maintains definite standards of performance (Stogdill, 1963). Thus, it is commonly known as a task-oriented, directive, or instrumental leadership style, offering guidance and directions for job completion (Mulki and Jaramillo, 2011). Despite a long absence from the leadership research, consideration, and initiating structure leadership remain critical, due to their distinctiveness with other leadership styles (DeRue *et al.*, 2011). Also, these two leadership styles have shown strong validity with various organizational outcome variables (Judge *et al.*, 2004).

As employees regard their supervisors as representing the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2010), past research indicates that supervisors can influence employees' emotional bond to the organization (i.e. affective commitment) (Cohen, 1992; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Therefore, supervisors' leadership styles may influence employees' affective commitment to the organization. In line with this argument, previous empirical findings have found that affective commitment of employees is highly associated with a variety of leadership styles (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2010; Herold *et al.*, 2008; Kim and Kim, 2015). More specifically, several studies indicate that employees' perceptions of consideration and initiating structure leadership styles are important factors in determining organizational commitment (Dale and Fox, 2008; Yukl, 1998). Therefore, the current study assumes that both leadership styles are positively related to employees' affective commitment to the organization. However, there has been a call for more research examining how the relationship between leadership styles and each of the facets of commitment vary across cultures (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, this study focusses on how culture moderates the relationship between consideration, and initiating structure leaderships and affective organizational commitment.

It has been established that cultural values influence employees' preference toward leadership styles (Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999; House *et al.*, 2004). In a similar vein, consideration, and initiating structure leadership styles may have varying influence on employees' affective organizational commitment depending on the underlying cultural values in a given country. Among the different cultural values, we focus on power distance as it is theoretically more strongly related to employees' reactions to leadership styles than other cultural values (Varela *et al.*, 2010). Power distance is defined as the extent to which people accept that power in organizations and institutions is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2001). We focus on the USA and Korea since these countries substantially differ in power distance (Hofstede, 2001). In low power distance cultures like the USA, employees tend to view power as being linked to coercion, making resources available to all, and sharing information widely (Elele and Fields, 2010; House *et al.*, 2004). Consequently, employees consider themselves on a relatively similar level with their supervisors. Thus, leaders high on consideration style who make comfortable conditions for subordinates, are friendly and approachable, and treat them as equals will be preferred in low power distance cultures (Pearce, 1981).

In contrast to the USA, Korea is characterized as a high power distance culture where people tend to take hierarchical inequalities for granted. The roots can be traced to Confucian values (Lee and Trim, 2008). These values emphasize a strong respect for hierarchy in the workplace to preserve interpersonal harmony (inwha) (Kim *et al.*, 2013; Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). Employees are expected to offer absolute loyalty to their supervisors in Confucian-based cultures, at the same time, they consider leaders to be authoritative and hierarchical (Alston, 1989; Lee, 1998). Leaders make resources

available to a few people, limit information, and see power as a means of providing social order and relational harmony (Elele and Fields, 2010; Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, in high power distance cultures such as Korea, employees who accept inequality between themselves and their supervisors are likely to follow their supervisor's instructions without question (Varela *et al.*, 2010). Thus, they feel more comfortable with a supervisor who assigns tasks, specifies procedures, plans, and schedules and works in line with the initiating structure style. Accordingly, a leader who gives detailed instructions on how, what, and with whom to accomplish their work (initiating structure leadership) would be preferred among Korean employees (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). Based on the above arguments, we expect that:

- H1a.* The positive relationship between subordinate perceptions of consideration leadership and affective organizational commitment will be stronger among US employees than Korean employees.
- H1b.* The positive relationship between subordinate perceptions of initiating structure leadership and affective organizational commitment will be stronger among Korean employees than US employees.

Organizational hierarchies

While House *et al.* (2004) found support for culture as a relatively enduring and powerful determinant of leader perception, the recent connectionist models have emphasized the role of multiple constraint contexts (Brown and Lord, 2001; Lord *et al.*, 2001). More specifically, leader prototypes of followers are collectively influenced by a number of interacting constraints, such as culture, task, and the attributes of both leader and follower. For instance, Den Hartog *et al.* (1999) found that followers' preferences toward leaders differ across organizational hierarchical levels. Drawing from the connectionist model of leadership perception (Brown and Lord, 2001; Lord *et al.*, 2001), we argue that rank and seniority of followers, influence followers' leader prototypes in Korea, a Confucian country. These two hierarchical variables may have a significant impact on the relationship between leadership styles and affective organizational commitment in Korea.

Confucianism, which emphasizes unequal but harmonious relationships, has been deeply rooted in organization cultures as well as employees' behaviors in Korea (Bae, 1997). These attributes are consistent with Hofstede's (1991) findings that Korea is characterized as high power distance and collectivist. Hence, Korean organizational cultures are attributed to hierarchy, authoritarianism, paternalism, loyalty, and harmony (Lee, 1998). Therefore, seniority and organizational hierarchy still plays an important role in human resource management policies such as pay grades and promotion (Bae, 1997; Hemmert, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the labor market is characterized by long-term employment with a very low turnover, thus, employees usually develop their careers in one organization (Takahashi, 2006). As a result, the higher the rank and seniority in the organization, the more the authority and the greater the responsibilities employees may have. Therefore, the roles and situations of employees differ largely depending on organizational rank and seniority level (Hildisch *et al.*, 2015) and correspondingly influence employees' leader prototypes and affective commitment.

In a hierarchical organization with a high degree of centralization such as Korea (Bae and Rowley, 2002), the managerial decision making process is highly centralized with the authority concentrated on higher ranking employees (Chen, 1995). At the lower

hierarchical level, seniority is a major determinant of promotion and pay raises. At higher hierarchical levels, the promotion and payment will be determined largely by supervisors' authority (Lee, 1998). Thus, building good relationships with supervisors is particularly critical for promotions for higher ranked employees (Chen and Francesco, 2000). Moreover, since most Asian employees consider promotion as the critical factor to their career development, in line with lifetime employment (Takahashi, 2006), internal competition for promotion becomes more intense, as employees advance into the higher ranks. Therefore, under the heavy competitive pressures, a considerate leader who is friendly and engaging, and shows concern for the well-being of employees, may be preferred and thus increase employees' affective commitment. Moreover, as supervisors have considerable authority in the promotion decisions; employees with higher rank have more motivation to build a good interpersonal relationship with their supervisors. Accordingly, these relationship-based leadership styles (Judge *et al.*, 2004) may be regarded as contextual cues for higher ranked employees to build connections with their supervisors.

As employees of higher rank are survivors who have not yet been dropped from the long-term competition, they have already internalized organizational norms and procedures in the organization. Consequently, a relatively high level of supervisory initiating structure such as clarifying employees' roles and assigning specific tasks and procedures (Stogdill, 1963) may be considered detrimental to their autonomy at work and thus it may be less preferred and thereby less effective at raising their affective commitment. According to Sinha (1984), the more employees gain experience and develop skills, the less they need direction from supervisors. On the other hand, they need continuing warmth as well as increased responsibility and autonomy from their leader. Based on these arguments, we expect that:

H2a. In Korea, rank moderates the relationship between consideration leadership, and affective organizational commitment, in that consideration leadership is more effective for employees in higher ranks.

H2b. In Korea, rank moderates the relationship between initiating structure leadership and affective organizational commitment, in that initiating structure leadership is less effective for employees in higher ranks.

When it comes to organizational seniority, both leadership styles may be regarded as important to influence the organizational affective commitment of relatively lower seniority (shorter tenure) employees. In a hierarchical organization, supervisors tend to give general directives rather than specific and detailed directives (Lee, 1998). Employees tend to be reluctant to ask supervisors' intentions and expectations, in line with Confucianism (Chen, 1995). Moreover, there are certain rules and procedures which usually cannot be found in official documents in the organization. Such unwritten information can be built up through years of experience and relatively lower seniority employees, especially newcomers, may find it difficult. Therefore, it is likely that both supervisory consideration and initiating structure leadership styles are effective in leading to a higher affective organizational commitment of relatively lower seniority employees.

The main obstacle of those who are of lower seniority is their lack of work experience. Leaders who show initiating structure leadership behavior, such as specifying work processes (Stogdill, 1963), would facilitate employees' adaption to the organization. More specifically, when lower seniority employees perceive that their supervisors show a high level of initiating structure leadership behavior, they may perceive that their supervisors

provide work information about formal and informal rules and procedures (Moris and Steers, 1980). Consequently, it would enhance employees' attachment to the organization. In addition, a leader who tries to have more time to listen to employees' problems and shows psychological support would make them feel better integrated into the organization. Initially, the subordinates depend considerably on the leader not only for guidance and direction, but also for support and encouragement (Sinha, 1984). In the career development literature, several studies have found that low seniority employees tend to be more receptive to various organizational practices in order to create a good impression (Wright and Bonett, 2002). Therefore, we argue that for employees with relatively lower seniority, both leadership styles are critical to positively influence affective organizational commitment. Based on the above arguments, we expect that:

H3a. In Korea, seniority moderates the relationship between consideration leadership and affective organizational commitment, in that consideration leadership is more effective for employees with shorter seniority.

H3b. In Korea, seniority moderates the relationship between initiating structure leadership and affective organizational commitment, in that initiating structure leadership is more effective for employees with shorter seniority.

On the contrary, the USA is characterized by low power distance, and individualism (Hofstede, 1991). Individualism refers to an orientation toward the self as an autonomous human being; hence, individual interest is the top priority in such societies (Hofstede, 2001). The typical relationships within organizations in low power distance countries are based on equality, not on hierarchical order (Lee *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, in general, individualistic and low power distance cultures such as the USA, emphasize individual achievement and equality to a greater extent than collectivistic and high power distance cultures like Korea. Such values have also influenced USA HR practices (Ramamoorthy *et al.*, 2005), e.g. promotion and compensation systems based on individual performance (Kim *et al.*, 2013). The labor market in the USA is characterized by short-term employment with a high turnover, and employees develop their careers and work experience in different organizations (Takahashi, 2006). Employees switch jobs easily depending on their pay levels and promotion opportunities. Hence, in general, they place less value on the prestige of higher rank and seniority within a single organization (Takahashi, 2006) and also pay less attention to hierarchical differences in the organization (Farh *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, rank and seniority may not have such a pronounced effect on leader prototypes and organizational commitment in the US. Based on these arguments, we expect that:

H4a. In the USA, rank does not moderate the relationships between both leadership styles and affective organizational commitment.

H4b. In the USA, seniority does not moderate the relationships between both leadership styles and affective organizational commitment.

Method

Samples

We collected survey data from part-time MBA students and their coworkers who were employed by companies in a variety of industries in the USA and Korea. The final sample includes 159 US employees and 296 Korean employees. Table I shows the sample characteristics for the two countries. In short, US employees are slightly younger, more highly educated, and have a slightly shorter seniority than Korean

	USA (159)		Korea (293)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Gender (= male)	101	63.5	226	77.1
<i>Age</i>				
Below 29 years old	111	69.8	47	16.0
30-39 years old	37	23.3	184	62.8
Over 40 years old	11	6.9	62	21.2
<i>Education level</i>				
High school or less	5	3.1	3	1.0
Undergraduate	67	42.2	205	70.0
Graduate	87	54.7	85	29.0
<i>Rank</i>				
Entry level worker/clerk	53	33.3	63	21.5
First level manager	66	41.5	61	20.8
Second level manager	31	19.5	129	44.0
Senior manager	9	5.7	40	13.7
<i>Seniority</i>				
Below 3 years	94	59.1	96	32.8
4-5 years	21	13.2	47	16.0
6-7 years	25	15.7	36	12.3
Over 8 years	19	12.0	114	38.9
<i>Department</i>				
Production/marketing	40	25.2	76	25.9
HRM/R&D/procurement	40	25.1	72	24.6
Finance/accounting	19	11.9	33	11.3
Others	60	37.8	112	38.2
<i>Industry</i>				
Manufacturing	52	32.7	116	39.6
Service	107	67.3	177	60.4

Notes: $n = 452$. Manufacturing: machinery, steel, engineering, electronic, automobile, chemical, oil refining, biotech, food, pharmaceutical, construction, and other industries; service: finance, banking, insurance, telecommunication, retailing, advertising, IT, consulting, healthcare, software, media, hotel, estate, education, publishing, and other industries

Table I.
Sample
characteristics

employees. These minor differences are typical considering the two to three-year long mandatory military service in Korea and a more flexible labor market in the USA.

Measures

The original questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into Korean using the back-translation method. We used a five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) to measure affective organizational commitment and two types of leadership styles.

Organizational commitment was measured by a commonly used construct from Meyer *et al.* (1993). Of the three components of organizational commitment, the most extensively used conceptualization is affective commitment, since it is known to have the strongest impact on the turnover and performance of employees in their organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Thus, this study focusses on affective commitment. This construct originally included six items. However, we had to drop three items that

were negatively worded due to low factor loadings. In retrospect, this is no surprise given the difficulty of translating and comprehending negatively worded statements in Korean and other Asian languages. A sample item is "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my company." The Cronbach's α was 0.80.

Two leadership styles were measured using seven items from the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ XII) by Stogdill (1963) as a short version. Short versions of LBDQ have been used in previous research (Keller, 2006). To measure consideration leadership style, we adopted four items from LBDQ. The four items are "My supervisor looks out for the personal welfare of group members," "My supervisor is friendly and approachable," "My supervisor treats all group members as his/her equals," and "My supervisor does little things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group." The Cronbach's α was 0.87. We used three items in LBDQ to measure initiating structure leadership style. The three items are "My supervisor schedules the work to be done," "My supervisor decides what shall be done and how it shall be done," and "My supervisor asks that group members follow standard rules and regulations." The Cronbach's α was 0.83.

Country was coded as a dummy variable (Korea = 0, USA = 1). Employees' rank was measured by a single question including four types of hierarchical position: entry level worker or clerk, first level manager, second level manager, and senior manager. The seniority of employees was measured by the question, "How long have you been employed by the current company (months)?" The mean value of Korean respondents was 82.1 months, while the mean for US respondents was 44.9 months.

Control variables included several demographic factors that may have an influence on the affective organizational commitment of employees: gender, age, and education level (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Age was categorized into seven groups from 1 = less than 25 years, to 7 = more than 49 years. Gender was measured as a dummy variable (male = 0, female = 1). Education was measured as the highest achieved education from 1 = high school or less to 5 = graduate degree. Also, we controlled for department and industry which may have an effect on the relationships between the two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment by rank and seniority. Department was measured by six dummy variables (one each for production, marketing, human resource management, research and development, procurement, finance or accounting, vs others). Industry was coded as a dummy variable (manufacture = 0, service = 1).

Results

To validate the multiple-item scales, i.e., two types of leadership and affective organizational commitment in a comparative study between the USA and Korea, we conducted a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The multi-group model provided a good fit to the data (χ^2 (df) = 175.22 (64), GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06). Further, we conducted reliability tests separately for the US and Korean samples. For US respondents, the Cronbach's α s were 0.88 for consideration, initiating structure (0.79), and affective organizational commitment (0.83). For Korean respondents, the Cronbach's α 's were 0.85 for consideration, initiating structure (0.86), and affective organizational commitment (0.79). Taken together, these findings suggest that our multi-item scales are reliable measures for both the USA and Korea.

Because the data in this study were based on self-report questionnaires where the measure of main variables, including two types of leadership styles and affective organizational commitment, were rated by the same person, tests for the hypothesized relationships may be subject to common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). We conducted a series of confirmatory analyses to reduce common method concerns.

First, we compared the model fits of the three-factor model where the measures of all three main variables (i.e. consideration leadership, initiating structure leadership, and affective organizational commitment) were included in any two and one factor model. The model fit of the three-factor model was substantially better than any lower factor model. Second, we re-estimated our measurement model by adding a latent common method factor (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). All the items were allowed to load onto both our theoretical latent constructs and the unmeasured latent common method factor. The results showed that all the factor loadings of items on our respective theoretical construct remained significant even after the effect of the common method factor was taken into account. The re-estimated models with the additional method factor yielded equal fit indices to the theoretical model without the method factor for the USA (χ^2 (df) = 76.35 (31), GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.09) and better fit indices than the theoretical model without the method factor for Korea (χ^2 (df) = 89.75 (31), GFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.08). While the inclusion of the common method factor improved overall model fit, the amount of the total variance explained by this method factor was 0 percent for the USA and 16.8 percent for Korea, which is below the suggested 25 percent that is considered an indication of substantial method variance (Williams *et al.*, 1989). Taken together, these results suggest that common method bias is not a serious problem.

Table II shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables separately for the USA and Korea. Consideration is strongly positively correlated with affective organizational commitment in the USA. Two types of leadership styles and seniority are positively correlated with affective organizational commitment in Korea, as we expected. There are no significant relationships between the control variables and affective organizational commitment.

To test the hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical linear regression analyses (see Table III). First, we ran a regression analysis using both the US and Korean samples. In Model 1, we tested the effects of control variables, but the effects did not have a significant effect on affective organizational commitment. When we added two types of leadership styles in Model 2, those leadership factors accounted for a 12 percent additional variance in affective organizational commitment (total $R^2 = 0.14$). Consideration was positively related to affective organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), whereas initiating structure was not significant. To test *H1a* and *H1b*, we added the interaction terms in Model 3. The two interaction terms accounted for a 4 percent additional variance in affective organizational commitment (total $R^2 = 0.18$). As shown in Model 3, the positive relationship between consideration and affective organizational commitment was stronger for US respondents ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$), supporting *H1a*. Although the relationship between initiating structure and affective organizational commitment was not significant in Model 2, there was quite a significant difference between the two countries ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, we further investigated the relationship between initiating structure and affective organizational commitment for each country sample.

To further test for *H1b*, *H2a*, *H2b*, *H3a*, *H3b*, *H4a* and *H4b*, we ran separate regression analyses for the USA and Korea. We split the sample because of the moderate sample size and limited variance of categorical interaction terms which would result in variance restriction. Among control variables in Model 1, only the HRM department dummy was significant in the Korean sample ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$). When we added two types of leadership styles in Model 2 of the US sample, those leadership factors accounted for 24 percent additional variance in the explanatory power of affective organizational

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean	SD
1. Gender	1.23	0.42										1.36	0.48
2. Age	3.70	1.18	-0.35***									2.36	1.25
3. Education level	4.28	0.47	-0.19**	0.31***								4.52	0.56
4. Industry	0.60	0.49	-0.06	0.05	0.11							0.68	0.47
5. Consideration	3.31	0.69	-0.18**	0.04	0.02	0.01						3.64	0.93
6. Initiating structure	3.31	0.71	-0.10	0.04	0.01	-0.01	0.58***					3.42	0.91
7. Rank	2.49	0.98	-0.29***	0.75***	0.29***	0.10	-0.01	0.02				1.97	0.87
8. Seniority	82.14	67.89	-0.10	0.63***	0.04	-0.02	0.05	0.05	0.44***			44.85	48.29
9. Affective commitment	3.45	0.73	-0.05	0.05	-0.05	0.02	0.26***	0.26***	0.00	0.15*	-0.13	3.52	0.98

Notes: Above diagonal: US sample; below diagonal: Korean sample. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table II.
Means, standard
deviations, and
correlations in both
samples

Table III.
Results of
hierarchical linear
regression analyses

Variables	Affective commitment (USA and Korea, <i>n</i> = 452)			Affective commitment (USA, <i>n</i> = 159)			Affective commitment (Korea, <i>n</i> = 293)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Control</i>									
Gender	-0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01	-0.02
Age	-0.04	0.00	-0.03	-0.11	-0.14	-0.19	0.06	0.06	-0.05
Education level	-0.06	-0.06	-0.04	-0.09	-0.01	-0.05	-0.07	-0.07	-0.03
Department	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)	(included)
Industry	0.01	0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.06
<i>Independent</i>									
Consideration		0.38***	0.30***		0.54***	0.50***		0.16*	0.14
Initiating structure		-0.08	0.01		-0.31***	-0.35***		0.16*	0.16*
<i>Moderator</i>									
Country			-0.03						-0.01
Rank									0.16*
Seniority									
<i>Interactions</i>									
Consideration x country			0.19***						0.23**
Initiating structure x country			-0.23***						-0.04
Consideration x rank									-0.21**
Initiating structure x rank									-0.04
Consideration x seniority									
Initiating structure x seniority	0.02	0.14***	0.18***	0.06	0.30***	0.34***	0.03	0.11**	0.18***
<i>R</i> ²	0.00	0.12***	0.16***	0.00	0.24***	0.25***	0.00	0.07**	0.12***
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²									

Notes: Six department dummies (production, marketing, HRM, R&D, procurement, finance or accounting, and others); industry dummy (manufacture = 0, service = 1); country dummy (Korea = 0, USA = 1); As *post hoc* tests, we conducted additional regression analyses for NC and CC instead of AC, as dependent variables. For the separated sample, initiating structure did not show any significant effects on NC, while consideration did not show any significant effects on CC for both countries. For the Korean sample, the positive interaction effects between consideration and rank on NC and CC were marginally significant ($p < 0.10$). There were no significant interaction effects in the USA. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (standardized coefficients are reported)

commitment (total $R^2 = 0.30$). In the case of the USA, consideration had a stronger positive relationship with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.54, p < 0.001$) than Korea ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.05$). We performed a z -test to assess if there was significant difference of the β coefficients between the two countries, followed by Cohen and Cohen's (1983) procedure. There was a significant difference (z -value = 3.45, $p < 0.001$). Thus, this result supported *H1a*. Contrary to our expectation, initiating structure was negatively related to affective organizational commitment in the USA ($\beta = -0.31, p < 0.001$), while it was positively related to affective organizational commitment in Korea ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.05$). There was also a significant difference (z -value = $-4.12, p < 0.001$), partially supporting *H1b*. When we added two types of leadership style, those accounted for 8 percent additional variance in affective organizational commitment in Model 2 of the Korea sample (total $R^2 = 0.11$).

Our hypothesized model further suggests differences of the moderating effects of rank and seniority between the two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment in Korea based on cultural characteristics such as Confucian values (*H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b*). These four interaction terms accounted for 7 percent additional variance in affective organizational commitment in the Korean sample (Model 3). The positive relationship between consideration and affective organizational commitment was stronger when employee's rank was higher ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.01$), but there was no effect of rank on the relationship between initiating structure and affective organizational commitment. Thus, *H2a* was supported, while *H2b* was not supported. The positive relationship between consideration and affective organizational commitment was stronger when employee's seniority was shorter ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.01$). However, there was no effect of seniority on the relationship between initiating structure and affective organizational commitment, contrary to our expectation. Thus, *H3a* was supported, while *H3b* was not supported.

Then, we tested the moderating effects of rank and seniority between the two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment in the USA (*H4a and H4b*). As we expected, there were no moderating effects of rank on the relationship between consideration and initiating structure leadership styles and affective organizational commitment. Thus, *H4a* was supported. Likewise, there were no moderating effects of seniority, providing support for *H4b*.

To further understand the meaning of the significant interaction terms, we plotted the simple slopes for the relationships between the two leadership styles and affective organizational commitment for both US and Korean samples using Aiken and West's (1991) procedures. The results, which are plotted in Figure 1, supported *H1a*: Consideration had a stronger positive relationship with affective organizational commitment in the USA (dashed line) than in Korea (solid line). To test this interpretation, we statistically compared the two slopes to zero. As expected, both slopes were different from zero for the USA ($\beta = 0.53, SE = 0.08, t = 7.03, p < 0.001$) and Korea ($\beta = 0.16, SE = 0.08, t = 2.00, p < 0.05$). Initiating structure related positively to affective organizational commitment in Korea (solid line), whereas the relationship was negative in the USA (dashed line), partially supporting *H1b*. Also, both slopes were different from zero for the USA ($\beta = -0.33, SE = 0.08, t = -4.35, p < 0.001$) and Korea ($\beta = 0.18, SE = 0.08, t = 2.33, p < 0.05$).

To further understand the meaning of the significant interaction terms for the Korean sample, we plotted the simple slopes for the relationships between consideration leadership and affective organizational commitment by rank and seniority. Figure 2 indicates that consideration related positively to affective organizational commitment when employee's rank was higher (dashed line). The slope for employees with higher

rank differed significantly from zero ($\beta = 0.41, SE = 0.12, t = 3.50, p < 0.001$), while the slope for employees with lower rank did not differ significantly from zero ($\beta = -0.04, SE = 0.10, t = -0.42, p = 0.68$). Thus *H2a* was supported. Consideration related positively to affective organizational commitment when employees' seniority was shorter (solid line). The slope for employees with longer seniority did not differ significantly from zero ($\beta = -0.17, SE = 0.14, t = -1.23, p = 0.22$), while the slope for employees with shorter seniority differed significantly from zero ($\beta = 0.35, SE = 0.10, t = 3.35, p < 0.001$). Thus, *H3a* was supported (Figures 1 and 2).

Given the important role of age and gender in explaining work attitudes, particularly in Asia (Chen and Francesco, 2000; Peltokorpi *et al.*, 2015), we conducted additional tests for their moderating effects on the relationships between the two leadership styles and affective commitment. However, the moderating effects were not significant. Furthermore, we tested for a potential three-way interaction of rank and seniority on the relationships between the two leadership styles and affective commitment. However, the results were not significant.

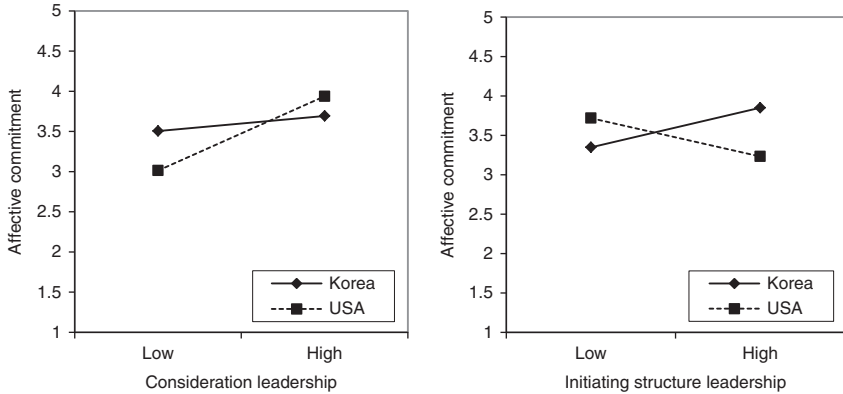


Figure 1. Interaction effects of two leadership styles by country on affective organizational commitment for both USA and Korean samples

Note: $n = 452$

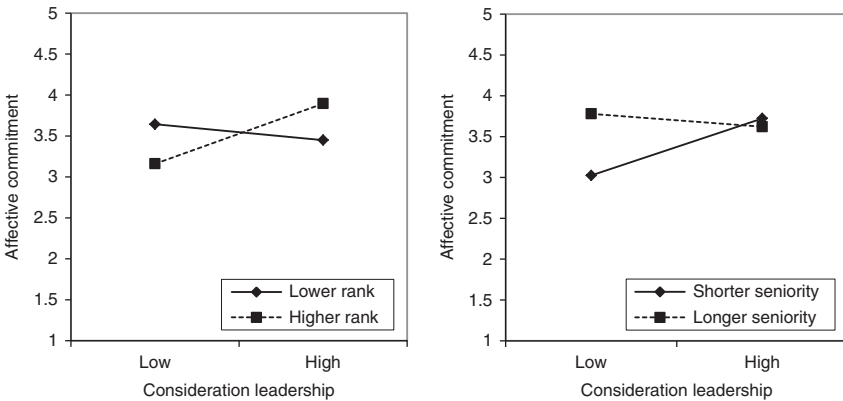


Figure 2. Interaction effects of consideration by rank and seniority on affective organizational commitment for Korea

Note: $n = 293$

Conclusion and discussion

Recent meta-analyses have suggested that there should be a renewed attention given to consideration, and initiating structure leadership and their organizational effectiveness with new theorizing (Judge *et al.*, 2004; Piccolo *et al.*, 2012). Despite the rise of comparative studies on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment (Jackson *et al.*, 2013), a general consensus is lacking on which leadership styles are effective across cultures (Hoffman and Shipper, 2012). This study examined the cultural boundary conditions under which the relationships between two types of leadership styles and employees' affective organizational commitment differed between the USA and Korea. Our findings demonstrated that the effects of the two leadership styles on affective organizational commitment differed in the USA and Korea, partly based on different cultures and different meanings of rank and seniority in the USA and Korea. Specifically, we found that rank and seniority, which are related but conceptually distinct variables, produce different preferences of leadership styles in Korea. That is, the higher the rank, consideration leadership styles resulted in higher affective organizational commitment. Conversely, the lower the seniority, consideration leadership was more strongly related to increased affective organizational commitment.

The findings of this study provide several important theoretical implications. First, this study applied CLT to the field of two leadership styles, i.e. consideration, and initiating structure, and affective organizational commitment. We thus respond to Judge *et al.*'s (2004) call for applying ILT to consideration, and initiating structure leadership study in cross-cultural context (i.e. the USA and Korea). Our findings confirm the general notion that the effects of leadership styles vary across countries (House *et al.*, 2004) and extend prior related research by demonstrating the applicability of CLT in cross-cultural leadership research.

Second, we compared the effects of two leadership styles, i.e. consideration and initiating structure, on affective organizational commitment between the USA and Korea. Consideration, and initiating structure have proven to be among the most robust leadership concepts (Fleishman, 1995), and our study provides empirical evidence in a cross-cultural context. The results showed clear differences across two countries. As hypothesized, consideration leadership had a stronger effect on US employees than Korean employees, whereas initiation leadership had a more positive effect on Korean employees. Our arguments are based on different cultural contexts. In individualistic, egalitarian cultures such as the USA, employees prefer consideration leadership. In contrast, in collectivistic, high power distance countries such as Korea, employees prefer initiation structure leadership, although consideration leadership style is also positively related to affective commitment. This may be due to the influence of Confucian values which emphasize harmony and absolute loyalty to one's supervisor (Kim *et al.*, 2013; Lee, 1998). Hence, Korean employees might have shown positive attitudes toward both leader behaviors.

Third, drawing from the connectionist model of leadership perception (Brown and Lord, 2001; Lord *et al.*, 2001), the results showed significant moderating effects of rank and seniority on the relationship between leadership style and affective organizational commitment in Korea, but not in the USA. The findings confirmed that rank and seniority are regarded as critical individual factors in Confucian countries such as Korea (Chen and Francesco, 2000; Hofstede, 2001). These findings suggest that the employee characteristics of rank and seniority, which have been neglected in cross-cultural leadership research (Chen and Francesco, 2000), have important roles in explaining the relationship between leadership styles and affective organizational commitment, specifically in the Asian context.

Our results provide important recommendations as to how managers should lead their employees across countries to maintain high affective organizational commitment. Employees in the USA and Korea responded differently to two different leadership styles. In the USA, consideration leadership had a positive effect on affective organizational commitment, whereas initiating structure leadership had a negative effect. Thus, managers in the USA should respect values such as autonomy and egalitarianism. As confirmed in previous research for employees in Western cultures, American employees prefer leaders who are approachable and considerate (i.e. people-oriented leadership) (Mulki and Jaramillo, 2011; Wendt *et al.*, 2009).

Although consideration leadership is important, initiating structure leadership also plays a critical role in managing Korean employees. As shown in studies of Chinese, Indian, and Japanese employees (Bhatnagar and Tjosvold, 2012), initiating structure leadership had a positive impact on employee effectiveness. Our findings also confirmed that the leader's acting as a guide and setting goals for employees' tasks (i.e. task-oriented leadership) was positively related to employees' affective organizational commitment in Korea. A better understanding of the employees' differing values and preferences would likely result in higher levels of affective organizational commitment and performance.

Also, besides initiating structure leadership, consideration leader behavior is closely related to employees' affective organizational commitment depending on the rank and seniority in Korea where Confucian values are prevalent. Hence, organizations in Korea and other countries with similar values might want to invest in leadership development programs which aim at fostering consideration (Petty and Pryor, 1974) in order to help their leaders to deal with the higher ranking and shorter seniority employees.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that Korean employees are likely to have different role and situational understandings depending on their rank and seniority, underlining the importance of hierarchies in Korean organizations. This is a reflection of Confucian values (Kim *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, US employees tend to place less emphasis on rank and seniority, as evidenced by the non-significant moderating effects on the relationship between leadership styles and affective organizational commitment. These results suggest that rank and seniority seem to have different meanings in the USA and Korea. Notwithstanding the trend toward Western HR practices in Korea, emphasizing flexible employment and performance-based reward systems, underlying Confucian values emphasizing hierarchy still play an important role and pose potential conflicts with such Western HR practices (Bae and Rowley, 2002; Froese *et al.*, 2008; Hemmert, 2014). In this regard, our results provide further justification as to why some Korean firms have only partly adopted Western HR practices (Choi, 2004; Miles, 2008). Thus, our findings suggest that MNEs operating in Korea should take traditional Korean cultural values into consideration when introducing Western HR practices (Froese *et al.*, 2008).

The limitations of this study point to a need for future research. First, the sample in this study consists of US and Korean employees only. This study suggests that the USA and Korea represent Western and Eastern culture, respectively. Although the two countries have different characteristics regarding power distance, both cultures are not representative for all Western and Eastern cultures. Department and industry of the two samples are relatively well matched, while there are some differences in the demographic variables due to social and institutional factors (e.g. two to three years of military service in Korea) between the two countries. Statistical interactions are typically underestimated in survey research because moderators tend to have inherently low statistical power compared to the main variables (McClelland and Judd, 1993). Thus, the relative small sample size of the US employees may influence the results of interactions between the two leadership styles and

demographic variables (i.e. rank and seniority). Therefore, future research should consider examining other cultures, balancing the demographic variables of samples, and collecting more data across countries to test the generalizability of this study's findings.

Second, we draw from CLT to build our framework model explaining how cultural differences generate different preferences toward leadership styles and thus lead to enhanced employees' affective organizational commitment. However, we did not explicitly ask participants about their preferred leadership styles, rather we inferred from the correlation between their direct supervisor leader behavior and employees' affective organizational commitment. Also, the impact of leadership style could differ depending on other employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance, and leader effectiveness. Thus, future research may ask participants about their leader behavior preference to reflect CLT directly and investigate the relationships between the two leadership styles and diverse outcome variables.

Third, even though a growing trend in cross-cultural research is to examine individual level cultural values (e.g. Froese, 2013), we did not include the individual level of cultural values to compare the effectiveness of two leadership styles across cultures. Thus, future studies could include individual level cultural values as moderators or as control variables to suggest more specific effects of cultural values.

Fourth, we had to drop three items of the original affective commitment scale due to low factor loadings. Perhaps this was a result of the negative wording of these three items. Negatively worded statements are difficult to translate and comprehend in Korean and many other languages as the logical statement is reversed, or is not clear compared to the meaning in English and many Western languages. The six items for affective commitment showed the differences of the factor loadings due to the reverse-coded items in Asian contexts such as Korea and China (Chen and Francesco, 2000; Lee *et al.*, 2001). We recommend that future studies carefully select and translate scales, or even consider developing indigenous measures. As in previous research, we have used a shortened version of the scale (Keller, 2006). However, future studies may use the long version of the LBDQ scale.

Finally, since all measures were collected at one point of time from the same person, this study, as so many other studies, suffered from common method bias. However, common method bias is less of a concern in this study because all our hypotheses were targeted at moderating and between sample effects, which cannot be anticipated by respondents. Furthermore, a series of CFA with an additional latent method factor indicated that common method bias was not a serious threat. Due to the cross-sectional nature, we cannot infer any causality. To further eliminate common method bias and enable causal claims, future researches could use other sources such as supervisor, peer, and subordinate ratings and conduct a longitudinal study.

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