



The Effect of Core Self-Evaluations on Chinese College Students' Academic Record

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Received Date: July 15, 2024

Published Date: September 23, 2024

Abstract

Background: Since Judge and colleagues introduced the concept of core self-evaluations (CSE) in 1997 [1], numerous researches has been done about the relationship between CSE with job satisfaction, job performance, subject well-being, stress coping strategy et al. Some Chinese scholars introduce Judge's theory into China. In addition to workers, housewives, students are also the main research objects.

Methods: We studied a sample of Chinese college students with their CSE, academic record, and a number of demographic variables such as gender, grand, hometown location, et al.

Results: CSE can predict the academic performance of Chinese college students. Students with higher scores on CSE tend to get good academic record.

Limitations: Core self-evaluation has been proved to be universal, but Chinese people's personality traits are different from Americans, so Judge's CSE may not fully reflect the characteristic of Chinese people.

Conclusion: Our results revealed that except the work area, CSE can also apply to learn area. As a personality characteristic, college students' CSE has a significant effect in predicting their academic performance.

Keywords: Core self-evaluation; Academic record; College Student; China

Introduction

Judge, et al. [1] integrate study of personality on job satisfaction and proposed a higher order construct they termed core self-evaluations (CSE). They defined it as the bottom-line evaluations that individuals hold about themselves and their self-worth. According to Judge et al. [1], Judge, Erez and Bono [2], Judge, Locke, et al. [3], this construct is a broad dispositional trait that it is indicated by four more specific traits--self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability. Self-esteem is the most fundamental and broad self-evaluation as it represents the overall value that one places on oneself [4]. Generalized self-efficacy is an evaluation of how well one can deal with life's challenges [5]. Internal locus of control reflects one's evaluation of one's ability to manage life outcomes. Emotional stability (low neuroticism) indicates a stable person, who is free of debilitating negative

emotions such as anxiety. According to Judge et al. [1], all these traits are broad in scope, fundamental to defining an individual's personality, and carry a fundamental evaluation or judgment about oneself. Then Judge, et al. [6] study the relationship of the four traits of CSE with job satisfaction and job performance. They find these traits are high correlated to job satisfaction and job performance. Further research and refinements may uncover a "supertrait" which could be one of the useful predictors of performance and attitudes across jobs. Based on the core self-evaluations theory, Judge, et al. [7] developed a direct measure of this trait-Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES) which consists of 12 items. It is a direct and relatively brief measure of the trait. Results indicated that the 12-item CSES was reliable, displayed a unitary factor structure, correlated significantly with job satisfaction, job performance,

and life satisfaction, and had validity equal to that of an optimal weighting of the 4 specific core traits (self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control), and incremental validity over the 5-factor model. Overall, results suggest that the CSES is a valid measure that should prove useful in applied psychology research. Their results suggest that the CSES is a valid measure that should prove useful in applied psychology research [8].

The cross-cultural research of CSE has come up with same conclusion. Judge, et al. [9] select some Spanish and Holland college students and employees as the subjects, and use the Spanish and Dutch version of CSES as measure tool. Results show that the scales' reliability and validity keep consistent with the American version. In 2005, Judge et al. investigate 183 college students and 251 employees and find that Core Self-evaluations and Goal Self-concordance are significant associated. This means that individuals with positive self-regard were more likely to pursue goals for intrinsic and identified (value-congruent) reasons [10]. In 2010, hypothesized relations of core self-evaluations with objective as well as subjective career success were confirmed [8].

In china, due to the different cultural background, core self-evaluation in the application of Chinese people is still lack of rigorous proof. At present, both indirect measurements and direct measurements about CSE are applied. Some scholars use four specific scales of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability to measure CSE; others revise Judge's CSE scale to adapt to China's specific conditions. Standardized measurement of the core self-evaluations is still a hot issue in China. Many studies have proved that Core Self-evaluation is a deep and stable personality characteristic, but most of them focus on job or career field. In this study, we will apply the theory of CSE into learning area to find whether or not the CSE can predict college students' academic performance.

Method

The Sample

Data for this study are from a survey conducted on a four-year university in Beijing, China, in Fall Semester of 2012. The survey was executed by systematic random sampling which was conducted with the SPSS program to select the samples. A total of 1,298 students evenly from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes were participated in the questionnaire survey.

Instruments

In this study, we use a full-length questionnaire that includes the measure of the CSES [7] as well as a number of demographic variables. The Chinese version of CSES was translated and back translated a number of times and confirmed to accurately reflect the meaning of the scale in the original English version. The scale includes 12 items and each item have 5 options ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 5 (very strongly agree).

In the study, the dependent variable is college students' academic records. We measured it by one item: "how do you recommend your academic records last semester?" There 4 options for this item from 1(higher) to 5 (lower). But, in our study we divide college students' academic records into two kinds of good and bad. In order to investigate the relationship between CSE and

college students' academic records, we have control a number of demographic variables includes years in school (freshmen and sophomores recorded as 0 and juniors and seniors recorded as 1), gender ("male" recorded as 0 and "female" recorded as 1), ethnic category ("Han" recorded as 0 and "minority" recorded as 1), hometown location ("urban" recorded as 0 and "rural" recorded as 1), parents' marital status ("first marriage" recorded as 0 and "remarried divorce widowed" recorded as 1), only-child status ("only-one child" recorded as 0 and "not only-child" recorded as 1), political affiliation ("communist party" recorded as 0 and "non-communist party" recorded as 1) and religion ("yes" recorded as 0 and "no" recorded as 1).

Administration of the survey

This survey was strictly executed by random sampling. First, the student roster was obtained from the university administration and exported into the SPSS data program. Then by using the SPSS program to do a systematic random sampling a list of the randomly selected students was created. With the help of the University Student Personnel Department, we were able to call up all the students on the random sampling list for the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire surveys were conducted in classrooms. The trained staff members were there to ensure the procedure going on well. Informed consent was obtained from each student participant. They had the rights to refuse the survey or quit whenever they want.

Data analyses and results

Descriptive presentation of the sample

Table 1 shows these college students' average score of CSES and gender difference do not exist. It also illustrates the demographic distribution of the sample. In the table, "Hometown Location" refers to whether the student comes from rural or urban areas. "Party Affiliation" indicates if the student is a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) member, a political status in the student population. In today's China, a CCP party or league membership is usually an indication of the individual's integrity and ability to socialize and work with others. In order to observe the difference between grades, we recode the "freshman" and "sophomore" into "freshmen and sophomores" and "junior" and "senior" into "juniors and seniors."

Major Factors Related to academic records

In Table 2, we use a binary logistic regression models to measure the relationship between academic records and CSES, personal (gender, ethnic category), family (hometown location, parents' marital status), and social (only-child status, political affiliation) factors. It shows that such control variables as hometown location, parent's marital status and only-child status has no significant effect on academic records, but year in school ($0.001 < p < 0.05$), gender ($p < 0.001$), ethnic category ($p < 0.001$), political affiliation ($p < 0.5$) and believing in religion ($p < 0.5$) are significantly associated with academic records. Specifically, male students, ethnic Han, communist party member and believers tended to get higher academic records; and vice versa. While controlling these demographic variables, we find that CSES is positively correlated with academic records. The regression model also tells us that college students who score higher on CSES tend to get good academic records.

Table 1: The Score of CSES and Demographic Characteristics of the Sample with Gender Comparisons.

Variable	Total (n=1298)	Male (n=499)	Female (n=799)	χ^2
CSE Score	36.56	36.73	36.46	
Years in school				0.82
Freshmen and Sophomores	756 (58.7%)	288 (58.3%)	468 (58.9%)	
Juniors and Seniors	532 (41.3%)	206 (41.7%)	326 (41.1%)	
Ethnic Category				0.12
Han	1109 (85.4%)	436(87.4%)	673 (84.2%)	
Minority	189 (14.6%)	63 (12.6%)	126 (15.8%)	
Hometown Location				0.17
Urban	214 (16.7%)	91 (18.5%)	123 (15.6%)	
Rural	1066 (83.3%)	400 (81.5%)	666 (84.4%)	
Parents' Marital Status				0.25
First Marriage	1178 (90.8%)	447 (89.6%)	731 (91.5%)	
Remarried Divorce Widowed	120 (9.2%)	52 (10.4%)	68 (8.5%)	
Only-Child Status				0.96
Only-Child	953 (73.4%)	366 (73.3%)	587 (73.5%)	
Not Only-Child	345 (26.6%)	133 (26.7%)	212(26.5%)	
Political Affiliation				0.35
Communist Party	208 (16%)	86 (17.2%)	122 (15.3%)	
Non-Communist Party	1090 (84%)	413 (82.8%)	677 (84.7%)	
Believing in Religion				0.35
Yes	100 (7.8%)	34 (6.9%)	66 (8.3%)	
No	1190 (92.2%)	461 (93.1%)	729(91.7%)	

Table 2: Major Factors Related to Academic Records: A Binary Logistic Regression Analysis.

Study Variables	Categorical Variables	Exp(B)	Std.Error
(Constant)		0.065***	0.554
CSES		1.023*	0.011
Years in school	Freshmen and Sophomores = 0 Juniors and Seniors = 1	0.672**	0.171
Gender	Male = 0 Female = 1	1.895***	0.171
Ethnic Category	Han = 0 Minority = 1	0.425***	0.224
Hometown Location	Urban = 0 Rural = 1	1.172	0.205
Parents' Marital Status	First Marriage = 0 Remarried Divorce Widowed = 1	1.113	0.228
Only-Child Status	Only-Child = 0 Not Only-Child = 1	0.933	0.170
Political Affiliation	Communist Party = 0 Non-Communist Party = 1	0.672*	0.171
Believing in Religion	Yes = 0 No = 1	1.811*	0.288
Note: Dependent variable: Core Self-evaluations; *: P<0.5, **: 0.01<P<0.5, ***: P<0.001			

Discussion

Core Self-evaluations (CSE) is a deep and stable personality characteristic. Since Judge et al. proposed this conception [1], most researches about CSE are about job satisfaction, job performance, subject well-being, stress coping strategy. For instance, the core self-evaluations concept has been proved to be positively related to goal self-concordance. It means that individuals with positive self-regard are more likely to pursue goals for intrinsic and identified (value-congruent) reasons [10]. Few studies have addressed the core self-evaluation into other fields. But as this study showed us, the CSE theory can totally applied to learning area. In this study, we find that CSES are significantly associated with academic records. It means that CSES can predict college students' academic performance. Students who score higher on CSES probably perform better in learning progress.

However, scholars, domestic and overseas, all have different views on Judge's CSES. According to Chinese specific conditions, it should be adjusted. We need to break through the Core Self-evaluations' research areas, and promote the study of college students' CSE, enrich correlate study on the relationship between college students' personality traits and learning attitudes, behaviors and feelings, enhance the theoretical value of the core self-evaluations.

Funding

This study was supported by China Ministry of Education Project 211 through the Central University of Finance and Economics (09SH003).

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