

Passion meets procrastination: comparative study of negative sales associate behaviours

Passion meets
procrastination

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Received 24 June 2019
Revised 5 July 2019
26 July 2019
10 January 2020
18 April 2020
19 May 2020
Accepted 20 May 2020

Abstract

Purpose – This study explores procrastination, a negative work behaviour, and its unlikely source, job passion. A dualistic conceptualization of job passion is explored in retail sales associate samples from the United States and China. The study tests relationships between harmonious job passion (HJP) and obsessive job passion (OJP) and the contingent effects of job satisfaction and salary level on their relationship to procrastination.

Design/methodology/approach – Data came from an online survey issued in the United States and China. The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical linear regression.

Findings – The analyses provide mixed findings. HJP is negatively associated with procrastination in both countries, while OJP's positive relationship is mixed. A post-hoc analysis testing the three-way interaction effect of OJP, job satisfaction and salary level on procrastination reveals a positive relationship to OJP in both countries.

Research limitations/implications – The study demonstrates that job passion can have both positive (HJP) and negative (OJP) work behaviour outcomes.

Practical implications – Brick-and-mortar retailers facing a saturated and highly competitive environment need HJP employees to drive superior customer service. This study demonstrates that employees with OJP may engage in negative behaviours which could further impair retail performance. Expanding empowerment and flexibility may heighten HJP and minimize OJP.

Originality/value – This study explores the dualistic conceptualization of job passion in a retail environment using cross-cultural samples.

Keywords Job passion, Job satisfaction, Negative employee behaviour, Retail, Front-line sales, Procrastination

Paper type Research paper

Retailing, despite apocalyptic press coverage (Baker, 2019), continues to increase in importance in the global economy. In the United States, retailing accounted for \$6.023 trillion in 2018, approximately 29.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) (US Bureau of Economic Advisors, 2019), and employed as many as 14.8m workers, approximately 9.8% of total employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). China retailing in 2015 represented US\$4.573 trillion in sales, approximately 41% of GDP, and employed more than 46.0m workers, approximately 14% of China's workforce (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2016).

Globally, online sales growth puts significant pressure on retailers to increase service efficacy for their in-store environments. Brick-and-mortar retailers, in the current highly competitive marketplace (Obeng *et al.*, 2016), may seek passionate employees hoping that they will provide superior service (Brown and Lam, 2008; Jones and Runyan, 2013). Research has long identified employee engagement and even passion as critical to delivering outstanding service (Baum *et al.*, 2001; Grewal *et al.*, 2017; Kennedy *et al.*, 2003; Schneider *et al.*, 1992). Job passion reflects employees' strong preference for and enjoyment of their jobs; their work is internalized and becomes part of their identity (Spehar *et al.*, 2016). For front-line sales associates, common job elements such as performance pressure and variable scheduling (Broadbridge, 2002; DiPietro *et al.*, 2019) can combine to increase perceptions of job importance



(Henly and Lambert, 2014), leading to job passion (intense liking and enjoyment of one's job). Vallerand *et al.* (2003) proposed a dualistic conceptualization of job passion, harmonious (HJP) and obsessive (OJP), which suggests that passion is not singularly positive in employee behavioural outcomes. Vallerand *et al.* (2003) conceptualize job passion as resulting from the internalization process associated with activities individuals engage in on a regular basis, such as their work. Harmonious job passion (HJP) is autonomously internalized resulting in a positive affect towards task engagement. This provides for work/life balance and creativity in task completion. Conversely, obsessive job passion (OJP) is internalized as the result of intra- and/or interpersonal pressure, which compels the individual to engage in the activity beyond that which they can control. Thus, OJP individuals continue to engage in activities even when they know that engagement will lead to conflict, achieving a negative affect towards individuals and activities which prevent them from engaging in their passion. This minimizes work/life balance and enhances rigidity and persistence towards passionate activities at the expense of all else. Subsequent job passion studies (e.g. Carbonneau *et al.*, 2008; Vallerand and Houffort, 2003) demonstrate that the dualistic conceptualization provides more information about employees than either job engagement or organizational commitment.

Studies have also shown that HJP correlates positively with job satisfaction while OJP is uncorrelated. Job satisfaction, long explored in the literature (Dobrow *et al.*, 2018; Herzberg *et al.*, 1959; Locke, 1976; Rogers *et al.*, 1994), is the extent to which employees feel positive about their jobs. While HJP predicts job satisfaction, job satisfaction has no predictive correlation with either HJP or OJP. Forest *et al.* (2012) demonstrate that HJP is related to flow guarding against burnout, while Houffort *et al.* (2013) find that HJP is negatively and OJP positively related to turnover intentions. The dualistic passion model shows that positive and negative behavioural outcomes provide value beyond traditional measures such as job satisfaction, engagement and organizational commitment. This research therefore adopts the dualistic job passion model to demonstrate particularly negative employee behavioural outcomes, such as procrastination. Procrastination is the voluntary delay of activities, despite potential negative consequences (Klingsieck, 2013). Job passion (either harmonious or obsessive) means that employees *like their job*. Job passion represents a condition in which job centrality is internalized into a sense of self (Lu *et al.*, 2019; Parboteeah and Cullen, 2003). Therefore, job passion which is a sense of self-predicated on intense job liking is fundamentally different from other measures that often lead to dissatisfaction. As HJP is predictive of job satisfaction, this study explores job satisfaction and salary level on the job passion–procrastination relationship. In their work on job satisfaction, Herzberg *et al.* (1959) identify salary as one of the five environmental or extrinsic factors (salary, policy and practices, supervision and working conditions) leading to job dissatisfaction. While salary may have little impact on OJP, it may serve to weaken HJP.

Extant retail literature largely defines procrastination as a consumer phenomenon delaying purchase (Grewal *et al.*, 2004; Khouja *et al.*, 2011; Zanjani *et al.*, 2016). Management literature, particularly with regard to employee development, identifies procrastination as a negative behaviour (Nguyen *et al.*, 2013; van den Berg and Roosen, 2018). Negative employee behaviours, given the current climate of brick-and-mortar retailing, pose a significant threat to retailer performance (Swimberghe *et al.*, 2014). Procrastination is estimated to cost US companies \$10,396.00 per year per employee (Steel, 2010) and British firms £76bn annually (Rich, 2015). To combat online purchasing, retailers must improve key in-store performance metrics such as speed to acknowledgement, knowledgeable interactions and transaction efficiency (Grewal and Levy, 2009; Guiry *et al.*, 1992; Karpen *et al.*, 2015), which are all susceptible to procrastination. Negative employee behaviours can generate negative customer responses such as increased brand switching, reduced brand loyalty and negative word of mouth (Ashley and Noble, 2014). Furthermore, customer online expectations are based on in-store experiences (Jones *et al.*, 2012); therefore, negative in-

store experiences can negatively impact online store performance (Kuan and Bock, 2007; Melis *et al.*, 2015).

The use of a single-construct job passion model to predict employee performance further exacerbates this problem for retailers. High levels of job passion are used to indicate productivity increases and/or improvement (Astakhova and Porter, 2015). However, this may represent an OJP employee who may be the *most* productive employee until he or she experiences a self-control failure (Spehar *et al.*, 2016). OJP employees searching for external rewards will eventually experience a self-control failure, which can begin a failure spiral, causing them to seek other employment, as indicated by their increased turnover intentions. Therefore, focussing on satisfaction or a singular construct of passion can lead employers to support employee actions that will lead to negative behavioural outcomes.

Retail literature showing that employees' passion for their jobs could have negative behavioural outcomes is scarce. Given ample evidence in other literature highlighting the potential negative affect of job passion-related outcomes on customer relationships and retailer performance, this gap should be explored. The current research aims to assess whether using a dualistic (harmonious and obsessive) job passion conceptualization, can help retailers identify front-line retail sales associates with the potential to engage in negative behaviours and/or minimize that potential before engagement.

To further explore the impact of passion on performance, we test our hypotheses in two environments, the United States and China. These sample locations demonstrate extreme differences in cultural values and work preferences (Hofstede and Hofstede, 1991; Jones *et al.*, 2014). China has significantly higher scores on power distance and long-term orientation, while the United States has significantly higher scores on individualism and indulgence (Hofstede, 2014). Furthermore, speed as an indicator of performance is the single highest predictor for the Chinese (96% of the explanatory power), more than double that of the United States (Baumann *et al.*, 2016), which may intensify performance pressure for employees, increasing OJP.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

HJP and OJP

Job passion comprises two constructs, each leading to different proposed behavioural outcomes (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003) – HJP positive and OJP negative. As the name implies, employees who express either form have an intense *liking of their job*. Therefore, for both HJP and OJP, job maintains a centrality of importance to their self. These forms of job passion are distinguished through means of internalization (Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003). HJP employees engage freely and willingly in their duties, such that successful task completion results in pleasure for them. Sales associates with HJP are devoted to their work and to their work–life balance (Zülch *et al.*, 2012). As a result, HJP consistently demonstrates positive outcomes in the literature (Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003). Conversely, OJP employees work under perceived external pressure to perform, minimizing work–life balance leading to negative behavioural outcomes (procrastination) (Ho *et al.*, 2011). This, in turn, results in a sense that the job has control *over* the person. As a result, OJP associates engage in compulsive work activity, which increases work–life balance tensions, further minimizing non-work activity and draining valuable self-control resources (Zülch *et al.*, 2012). The depleted self-control resources increase the likelihood that associates will engage in negative work behaviours. Examples of negative work may include: poor customer service (resentment or anger towards customers for work interruption), dereliction of duty, negative attitudes or interactions with other employees and of course procrastination (Swimberghe *et al.*, 2014). However, OJP literature has not been able to establish consistency in negative outcomes, finding both positive (Burke *et al.*, 2015) and negative (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003) outcomes.

Job passion and procrastination

Self-control requires substantial effort to maintain (Baumeister *et al.*, 2007) and can be depleted to the point of failure (Lian *et al.*, 2017; Muraven *et al.*, 1998). Sales associates demonstrate self-control through reliable work productivity, absent negative behaviours such as procrastination (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000). The inability to disengage from the passionate activity as a result of OJP individuals' lack of control over their passion prevents them from fully engaging in other activities (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, OJP employees are distracted and frustrated with being separated from their desired activity. This manifests itself in daydreaming about their desired activity, thinking of novel ways to return to the activity, thinking of new ways to engage in their desired activity and more, which all lead to procrastination (Wilson and Nguyen, 2012). Procrastination negatively affects employee well-being, increasing stress and anxiety (Beutel *et al.*, 2016; Steel *et al.*, 2001). Particularly problematic with procrastination is the negative affect on the employees' performance (Steel *et al.*, 2001) which also negatively impacts the performance of others dependent on their output (Pychyl and Flett, 2012), thus doubling the negative impact.

HJP employees exercise self-control *over* their passion, versus OJP employees who are *controlled* by their passion (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). As a result, HJP employees consume fewer self-control resources and engage in restorative non-work activities, thus decreasing the likelihood of self-control failures (e.g. procrastination) (Ferrari, 2001; Lian *et al.*, 2017; Tangney *et al.*, 2004). For OJP employees, perceived pressure to perform increases compulsive work behaviours, eschewing restorative non-work activities, leading to self-control failure and increased likelihood of engaging in negative work behaviour.

HJP and procrastination

HJP represents a personal choice to engage in work activities (Lusch and Jaworski, 1991) and, when appropriate, non-work activities (Vallerand and Houfort, 2003). Although self-control consumes personal resources (Lu *et al.*, 2019; Muraven *et al.*, 1998), HJP individuals maintain work-life balance, engaging in non-work activities, restoring valuable resources (Moller *et al.*, 2006). Adequate self-control recourses reduce the likelihood of negative work behaviours such as procrastination. As HJP consistently demonstrates positive work behaviour outcomes, we anticipate that the HJP-procrastination relationship will be negative in both samples. Thus:

- H1. HJP has a significant and negative relationship to procrastination in both (a) US sample and (b) China sample.

OJP and procrastination

OJP stems from perceived external pressure to perform and a need for external rewards (Vallerand and Houfort, 2003). OJP employees' constant need to perform, driven by the perceived pressure, consumes their self-control resources, reducing their ability to exert *control over* their job passion (Vallerand and Houfort, 2003). OJP employees favouring work forgo non-work activities continuing to drain versus restoring self-control resources. As a result, OJP employees with depleted self-control resources experience self-control failures leading to negative work behaviours (e.g. procrastination) (Isen and Reeve, 2005; Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). Decreases in performance increases their stress, anxiety and fear of failure (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003), furthering a performance failure spiral (Burka and Yuen, 2008; Lay, 1986). Because Chinese culture is more collectivist than American (Hofstede, 1984), we would anticipate that pressure to conform will increase resource depletion, strengthening the relationship to procrastination. From this conceptualization of OJP, we expect a positive OJP-procrastination relationship, though its strength will likely vary culturally. Thus:

H2. OJP has a significant and positive relationship to procrastination; however, this relationship is (a) weaker in the US sample and (b) stronger in the China sample.

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Moderating effects of job satisfaction and salary level

Procrastination has demonstrated consistently low correlations with individual differences, suggesting additional research is required. Well suited to the retail context is motivational control (Metcalf and Mischel, 1999), particularly job satisfaction and salary level. Job satisfaction is linked to employees' sense of control through their ability to manipulate the work environment (Judge and Bono, 2001; Metcalf and Mischel, 1999), as is salary level (Cooke, 1999; Shane and Heckhausen, 2016; Stevens *et al.*, 1993).

We propose that job satisfaction strengthens the negative HJP–procrastination relationship, through positive task involvement inhibiting procrastination (Haycock, 1993). HJP retail sales associates enjoy the different skills and tasks required (Arndt *et al.*, 2006), increasing motivation and job satisfaction, resulting in a consistent emotional reward state (Vallerand and Houlihan, 2003). Conversely, when tasks are unpleasant or uninteresting, they may prompt procrastination (Haycock, 1993). Retail sales associates seeking enhanced job satisfaction may seek more interesting job aspects, identify more challenging tasks or learn new skills. Each of these actions would consume significant resources exacerbating self-control resource depletion for HJP associates. Thus:

H3. Job satisfaction moderates the negative relationship between HJP and procrastination, such that when job satisfaction is high (low), the relationship is strengthened (weakened), (a) weaker in the US sample and (b) stronger in the China sample.

Salary level moderates the positive OJP–procrastination relationship. External rewards such as self-esteem enhancement, increased superiority and enhanced social acceptance are ego drivers of OJP and aspects of increased salary levels (Alavi and Askaripur, 2003; Hodgins and Knee, 2002). Therefore, for OJP employees with higher salary levels, salary increases can heighten the perceived pressure to work to earn future rewards (Amiot *et al.*, 2006). For OJP associates, the increased work increases stress, depletes self-control resources and strengthens the positive OJP–procrastination relationship (Vallerand *et al.*, 2010). Conversely, OJP associates with lower salary levels may perceive their efforts as “on the right track”. This reduces the exertion of additional resources, weakening the positive OJP–procrastination relationship. While salary level has a significant impact in some industries, it has not been widely explored in retail (Guan *et al.*, 2013). Thus:

H4. Salary level moderates the positive OJP and procrastination relationship, such that salary level is high (low), the relationship is strengthened (weakened), (a) significant in the US sample and (b) non-significant in the China sample.

Method

Respondents and procedure

The China survey was translated and back-translated into Mandarin Chinese, the official business language of China (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2019). Two Chinese faculty at a major US university who are native Mandarin speakers and fluent in English translated the survey. Translation/back-translation was performed following accepted procedures (McGorry, 2000); one translator converted the original survey into Mandarin, and the other translator converted it back to English. Discrepancies were identified and resolved through discussion with the translators. In total, 300 responses were collected each from the United States and China ($n = 600$). Respondents were recruited by a third-party panel survey provider. The sample criteria included factors such as permanent residency, full-time retail

employment, gender and age for comparable sample characteristics by country. Standard incentives for completing the survey were provided (\$6.00 for US respondents, \$7.00 for Chinese respondents). Full-time employment was stipulated, as research indicates that part-time employees are less satisfied in their positions, have higher negative work assessments and have higher intentions to leave than full-time employees (Joung *et al.*, 2018). The survey contained three attention check questions, and the responses were checked for survey duration and straight-lining (same or patterned response to all questions) behaviour. Failure on two attention check questions resulted in removal (Vannette and Krosnick, 2014); straight-lining responses were removed (Weijters *et al.*, 2008); responses more than one standard deviation faster than the survey duration mean were also discarded (Vannette and Krosnick, 2014). The panel survey provider continued to query the panel until all samples obtained were acceptable.

The US sample included 150 (50%) women, and the mean age was 39.66 years (SD = 12.94). Of the respondents, 139 (46.3%) were married, 248 (82.7%) were Caucasian and 125 (41.7%) occupied non-management positions earning an average annual salary of US\$44,845 (309,018 CNY) [1]. In addition, they had 20.31 (SD = 12.74) years of work experience and 8.38 (SD = 7.80) years of tenure, on average.

The China sample included 150 (50%) women, and the mean age was 38.15 years (SD = 11.31). Of the respondents, 241 (80.3%) were married, 298 (99.3%) were Han Chinese and 73 (24.3%) occupied non-management positions earning an average annual salary of 102,761 CNY (US\$14,913). In addition, they had 15.83 (SD = 11.05) years of work experience and 8.42 (SD = 7.05) years of tenure, on average. Both income distributions represent lower middle class in their respective countries (Fry and Kochchar, 2018; Pinguhi, 2019).

Measures

We measured both job passion variables (HJP and OJP) using scales developed by Vallerand *et al.* (2003) adapted to the retail context (Ho *et al.*, 2011). Sample items include “My job allows me to live a variety of experiences” and “I have difficulty imagining my life without my job” for HJP and OJP, respectively. Both scales ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). HJP had Cronbach’s alphas of 0.92 and 0.79 for the US and China samples, respectively. OJP had Cronbach’s alphas of 0.88 and 0.79 for the US and China samples, respectively.

We assessed procrastination at work using the scale developed and validated by Mann *et al.* (1997), with items such as “I waste a lot of time on trivial matters before getting to the final decision”. We used a three-point measurement scale (1 = “not true for me”, 2 = “sometimes true”, and 3 = “true for me”), with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.78 and 0.86 for the US and China samples, respectively.

We measured job satisfaction using the scale developed by Saks (1995), with items such as “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job”. The scale was anchored by 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alphas were 0.84 and 0.85 for the US and China samples, respectively.

Respondents also reported their salary or earned income in the past 12 months in their respective national currencies. Both research (Seibert *et al.*, 1999) and practice (e.g., US census) widely use self-report measures with average differences between self-reported and archival salary of $\leq 1\%$ (Judge *et al.*, 1995). Respondents’ annual salary in China was converted to US dollars using the exchange rates at the time of data collection. Consistent with recommendations (Converse *et al.*, 2012), we then log-transformed the salary-level variable in each country to reduce positive skewness and used the transformed variable in subsequent analyses (Davison, 2014). Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and correlation for the study variables.

Analyses and results

Convergent and discriminant validity

Confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 24 examined the convergent and discriminant validity of the four latent constructs included in the study (HJP, OJP, job satisfaction and procrastination). To achieve model consistency across the samples, we removed one item from the HJP scale and two items from the OJP scale. As Table 1 shows, average variances extracted (AVEs) and composite reliabilities (CRs) are well above the recommended cut-off of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and 0.70 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), respectively. To assess discriminant validity in each sample, we compared the proposed four-factor model with two alternative models: three-factor model (work passion as a single construct, job satisfaction and procrastination) and one-factor model (all scale items loaded onto a single factor). As Table 2 shows, the hypothesized model demonstrated the best fit in each sample. Furthermore, in each sample, all factor loadings are strong and significant ($p < 0.01$). Overall, the results indicate convergent and discriminant validity of the study model.

Invariance testing

Given our study data is cross-cultural, we tested for measurement invariance, assessing construct scale equivalence across both populations (Mullen, 1995). To test the US and China samples, we employed multi-group covariance structure analysis according to Yuan and Bentler (2005), as is commonly accepted. The initial step develops a baseline multi-group model for use as a reference to compare fit in subsequently more constrained models. In each case (Models 1–4), invariance is demonstrated when the additional constraint(s) result in no significant change in Chi-square. The first step tests whether the factor structure of each model is invariant across the samples, representing configural invariance (Model 1). Next, factor loadings are constrained which is metric invariance (Model 2); followed by the additional constraint of the factor covariances, which is scalar invariance (Model 3); and finally, the additional constraint of factor variances, which is factor invariance (Model 4). We tested the level of invariance according to the minimum level required for the goals of the study (see Table 3) (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998) and demonstrate sufficient invariance for the analyses (Pedhazur, 1982).

Common method variance

Data collection involved several procedural remedies to minimize common method bias, including anonymous survey responses, different scale measurements and dependent variable questions first (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). In addition, we used the common latent factor method to determine the level of common method in the model (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). The results indicate that approximately 5% of the variance is attributable to a common factor. Each variable in the model exceeded the recommended cut-off of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) by more than 5%, suggesting that common method variance has no meaningful impact on the study outcomes.

Hypotheses testing

We used hierarchical linear regressions to test H1–H4, allowing comparison between alternative models with and without interaction terms (Jaccard and Turrisi, 2003). We followed the same steps to test the hypotheses in each sample. We mean-centred all the continuous variables in the model before the regression analyses and then used these variables to create the interaction terms (Aiken and West, 1991). We entered organizational size in Step 1 and the main effects of HJP and OJP in Step 2. To separate the effects of job passion from those of job satisfaction and salary level, we entered the main effects of the last

Table 1.
Means, standard deviations and correlations for the study variables in the US and China samples

| Variable | Mean | SD | AVE | CR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|-------|----------|----------|---------|----------|-------|-------|
| <i>US sample (n = 300)</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organizational size | 427168.89 | 5801945.33 | | | | | | | | |
| HJP | 3.30 | 0.99 | 0.605 | 0.901 | – | 0.920 | | | | |
| OJP | 2.67 | 1.02 | 0.510 | 0.832 | –0.220** | 0.520** | 0.880 | | | |
| Job satisfaction | 5.07 | 1.36 | 0.743 | 0.743 | –0.160** | 0.720** | 0.430** | 0.840 | | |
| Salary level (USD) | 44844.95 | 91,493.29 | | | –0.190** | 0.110 | 0.110 | 0.050 | – | |
| Procrastination | 1.40 | 0.40 | 0.559 | 0.863 | 0.010 | –0.160** | –0.090 | –0.200** | 0.010 | 0.780 |
| <i>China sample (n = 300)</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organizational size | 655.51 | 1311.77 | | | | | | | | |
| HJP | 3.72 | 0.59 | 0.909 | 0.863 | – | 0.790 | | | | |
| OJP | 3.25 | 0.73 | 0.832 | 0.510 | 0.050 | 0.49** | 0.790 | | | |
| Job satisfaction | 5.19 | 1.01 | 0.744 | 0.896 | 0.110* | 0.59** | 0.440** | 0.850 | | |
| Salary level (USD) | 16943.28 | 27155.51 | | | 0.210** | 0.15** | 0.280** | 0.280** | – | |
| Procrastination | | | 0.559 | 0.863 | 0.290** | –0.22** | 0.060 | –0.160** | 0.100 | 0.860 |

Note(s): Harmonious Job Passion (HJP), Obsessive Job Passion (OJP)
Cronbach's alphas are provided diagonally. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

| Model | US sample ($n = 300$) | China sample ($n = 300$) |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Hypothesized four-factor model (HJP, OJP, job satisfaction and procrastination)</i> | | |
| χ^2 (df) | 337.10(146), $p = 0.000$ | 376.18(146), $p = 0.000$ |
| Normed χ^2 | 2.31 | 2.58 |
| CFI | 0.94 | 0.91 |
| NFI | 0.90 | 0.86 |
| TLI | 0.93 | 0.89 |
| RMSEA | 0.07 | 0.07 |
| <i>Alternative three-factor model (job passion as a single factor, job satisfaction and procrastination)</i> | | |
| χ^2 (df) | 803.89(149), $p = 0.000$ | 527.72(149), $p = 0.000$ |
| $\Delta\chi^2$ (df) | 466.80 ^{***} (3) | 151.54 ^{***} (3) |
| CFI | 0.80 | 0.85 |
| NFI | 0.77 | 0.80 |
| TLI | 0.77 | 0.82 |
| RMSEA | 0.12 | 0.09 |
| χ^2 (df) | 1312.24(152), $p = 0.000$ | 1330.24(152), $p = 0.000$ |
| $\Delta\chi^2$ (df) | 975.15 ^{***} (6) | 954.06 ^{***} (6) |
| CFI | 0.647 | 0.52 |
| NFI | 0.621 | 0.49 |
| TLI | 0.603 | 0.46 |
| RMSEA | 0.160 | 0.16 |

Table 2. Summary of confirmatory factor analyses results for the US and China samples

Note(s): CFI = comparative fit index, NFI = normed fit index, TLI = Tucker–Lewis index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. ^{***} = $p < 0.001$

| Model | χ^2 | df | p | χ^2 /df | $\Delta\chi^2$ | Δ df | CFI | RMSEA |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|-------|--------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Model 1 – baseline | 513.147 | 202 | 0.000 | 2.540 | | | 0.927 | 0.051 |
| Model 2 – FL invariant | 535.444 | 215 | 0.000 | 2.532 | 22.297 ^{ns} | 13 | 0.922 | 0.051 |
| Model 3 – FL and FCV | 561.745 | 217 | 0.000 | 2.589 | 48.597 [*] | 15 | 0.919 | 0.052 |
| Model 4 – FL, FCV and FV | 661.824 | 220 | 0.000 | 3.005 | 148.028 [*] | 18 | 0.869 | 0.058 |

Note(s): FL = factor loadings; FCV = factor variance–covariance FV = factor variance; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; ns = $p \geq 0.05$ ^{***} $p \leq 0.001$

Table 3. Invariance analysis

two variables in Step 3. Step 4 entered the interaction terms HJP \times job satisfaction and OJP \times salary level. We plotted the significant interaction effects for each moderator from low (–1SD from the mean) to high (+1SD from the mean) and then performed simple slope analyses (Aiken and West, 1991).

Table 4 reports the US and China samples’ results of the hierarchical linear regressions testing. In neither the US nor China sample was the control variable of organizational size significantly associated with procrastination (US sample: $\beta = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$; China sample: $\beta = 0.07$, $p > 0.05$). Step 2 tests H1, predicting a negative HJP and procrastination relationship. Both the US ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$) and China ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.05$) samples support H1. The R -square for H1 is significant but limited in effect on the US sample (adj. R^2 and F statistic: $p < 0.05$), while significantly more robust in the China sample (adj. R^2 and F statistic: $p < 0.001$). As a result, we are more confident in the effect in the China sample. H2 predicts a positive OJP and procrastination relationship, strength varying by culture. The analysis of this hypothesis led to mixed results. OJP had a significant, positive relationship to procrastination in China ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$) but a non-significant, negative relationship in the United States ($\beta = -0.01$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, H2 is only partially supported for cultural

| Variables | US sample ($n = 300$) | | | | China sample ($n = 300$) | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 |
| <i>Controls</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Org. size | 0.050 | 0.020 | 0.010 | 0.010 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.060 | 0.050 |
| <i>Main effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| HJP | | -0.150* | -0.030 | -0.020 | | -0.340*** | -0.270*** | -0.290*** |
| OJP | | -0.010 | -0.010 | -0.460 | | 0.220** | 0.220** | -0.490 |
| Job satisfaction | | | -0.180* | -0.240** | | | -0.150* | -0.150* |
| Salary level | | | 0.030 | 0.020 | | | 0.110 | 0.100 |
| <i>Two-way interaction effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| HJP \times job satisfaction | | | | -0.140* | | | | -0.130* |
| OJP \times salary level | | | | 0.470 | | | | 0.720 |
| R^2 | 0.010 | 0.030 | 0.040 | 0.060 | 0.010 | 0.090 | 0.110 | 0.130 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.000 | 0.020 | 0.030 | 0.040 | 0.000 | 0.090 | 0.100 | 0.110 |
| ΔR^2 | 0.010 | 0.020* | 0.020 | 0.020 | 0.010 | 0.090*** | 0.020** | 0.020* |
| F | 0.860 | 4.380* | 6.800** | 9.230** | 1.540 | 16.010*** | 19.240*** | 22.400*** |

Table 4. Results of hierarchical linear regression analyses in the US and China samples (two-way moderation effects)

Note(s): Dependent variable is procrastination

*** $p < 0.001$

** $p < 0.01$

* $p < 0.05$

differences. As a note, the size of the US sample R -square is relatively small. While this indicates that the amount of variance explained is modest, its significance means that it is stable and instructive regarding the effect being explored (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004; Taylor and Russell, 1939). As work engagement is an activity entailing a complex set of behaviours and attitudes, it is reasonable to expect this small subset of variables to explain relatively small levels of the overall experience, yet demonstrate theoretical and practical significance (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004; Schmidt *et al.*, 1979).

H3 predicts that job satisfaction moderates the negative HJP–procrastination relationship varying by culture. Both samples were statistically significant, in support of H3 (US sample: $\beta = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$; China sample: $\beta = -0.13$, $p < 0.05$). Figures 1 and 2 depict the significant interactions in the United States and China, respectively. The simple slope test further examines the relationships and reveals that high job satisfaction is significant ($\beta = -0.04$, $t = -2.15$, $p < 0.05$) while the slope of low job satisfaction is not ($\beta = 0.03$, $t = 0.70$, $p > 0.05$). When satisfied with their jobs, both US and Chinese HJP employees will procrastinate to a lesser degree than OJP employees. H3 is partially supported as both slope tests fail to demonstrate significant cultural differences.

H4 explores whether salary level moderates the relationship between OJP and procrastination. As Table 4 shows, the interactive effect of OJP and salary level on procrastination was not significant for either the US ($\beta = 0.47$, $p > 0.05$) or China ($\beta = 0.72$, $p > 0.05$) sample, demonstrating partial support for H4.

Post-hoc analysis

Regardless of employees' orientation towards OJP or HJP, job passion by definition means that they *like* their jobs (Vallerand and Houliort, 2003). OJP and job satisfaction research is inconsistent. Burke *et al.* (2015) find that the relationship is positive and significant related to

Russia but non-significant in China. Research has also shown that the combination of job satisfaction and salary can increase service employees' performance and loyalty (Sarwar and Abugre, 2013). Other research indicates that salary level and job satisfaction are predictive only of performance for both men and women (Hulin and Smith, 1965; Spencer et al., 2016). China is dramatically more collectivistic and less indulgent than the United States, reducing the influence of salary as a motivational tool (Hofstede, 1984). Therefore, in the China sample, for the high salary level condition, we would anticipate finding no significant result. Given the lack of consistency in prior research, particularly with regard to salary level, we again examine the data through a post-hoc analysis. Post-hoc analyses are particularly relevant when unanticipated outcomes occur that are not consistent with the literature (Dienes, 2011). Furthermore, post-hoc analyses can provide critical insight into an outcome that would not have reasonably been considered *a priori* (Scott and Berger, 2010).

The aim of the post-hoc analysis is to explore whether a three-way interaction of job satisfaction, salary level and OJP leads to significant and predictable results. Salary level by itself might be insufficient to affect the OJP–procrastination relationship, as employees still need to like their jobs if procrastination is to decrease. This three-way interaction may demonstrate the anticipated result and explain why the hypothesized two-way interaction is not supported. Thus,

H5. Three-way interaction of job satisfaction–salary level–OJP will have a negative relationship with procrastination such that high OJP x low salary level x low job satisfaction strengthens procrastination which will be significant (a) in both the US and China samples, and low OJP x high salary level x high-high job satisfaction

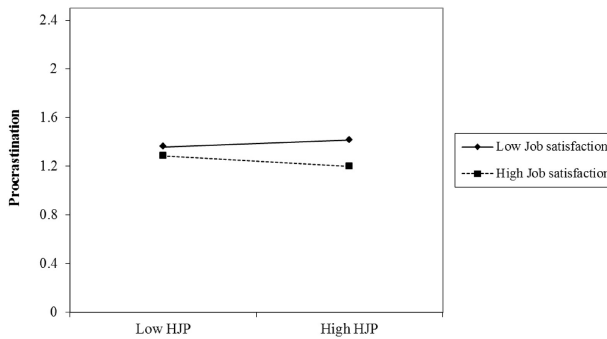


Figure 1. Moderating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between HJP and procrastination (US sample)

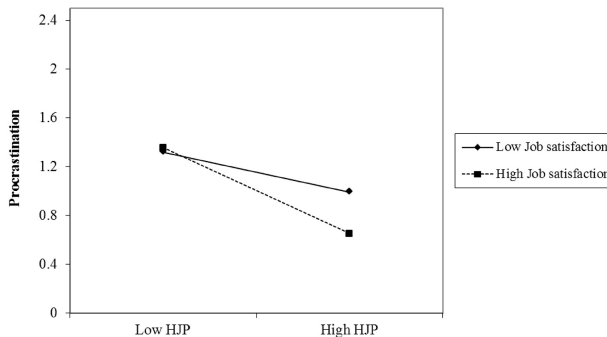


Figure 2. Moderating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between HJP and procrastination (China sample)

weakens procrastination which will be (b) significant in the US sample and (c) non-significant in the China sample.

Again, employing hierarchical regression, we find that the three-way interaction term is statistically significant for both the US ($\beta = -2.08, p < 0.01$) and China ($\beta = -1.03, p < 0.01$) samples (see Table 5 and the plots in Figures 3 and 4). In both samples, high OJP associates procrastinate least under low job satisfaction and low salary levels. Low OJP employees in the United States are least likely to procrastinate under high job satisfaction and high salaries levels. In the China sample, we find that procrastination is unrelated to either job satisfaction or salary in the low OJP condition. Therefore, the H5 is fully supported.

Discussion

This cross-cultural study of US and Chinese retail sales associates explores HJP and OJP and the negative work behaviour of procrastination. The study also examines the conditional effects of job satisfaction and salary level on the relationships. As hypothesized, HJP is consistently negatively associated with procrastination. This finding confirms previous research indicating that HJP increases positive effects and minimizes negative effects, thus increasing job enjoyment (Amiot *et al.*, 2006).

Although we hypothesized a positive OJP–procrastination relationship for both samples, the relationship received support only in China. This result may not be surprising, given the previously cited inconsistent research findings. The lack of consistency in the findings may be due to the presence of certain conditional effects (Burke *et al.*, 2015). The conditional effects included in this study (i.e. job satisfaction and salary level) revealed mixed findings. As expected, the interactive effects of HJP and job satisfaction on procrastination were negative and significant in both countries. HJP associates from both the United States and China procrastinate less when job satisfaction increases. However, we failed to find support for the interaction between OJP and salary level in either sample, suggesting that procrastination is not contingent on salary level.

The inconsistency in the OJP findings led us to perform a post-hoc analysis to explore whether job satisfaction could further influence the OJP x salary level interaction. Our analysis confirms the anticipated negative behavioural outcomes associated with OJP. In both the United States and China, sales associates in the low job satisfaction and salary level condition who exhibit high levels of OJP also have the highest levels of procrastination. US sales associates with low OJP procrastinate least when they have high job satisfaction and salary levels. Procrastination among Chinese sales associates with low OJP is unrelated to job satisfaction or salary level.

The fact that both HJP and OJP associates *like* their jobs makes for complex measurement and understanding. This is particularly true for the OJP condition. Determining what might make employees who like their jobs engage in negative behaviour is more complex than doing so for employees who do *not* like their jobs. Examination of OJP associate data through two-way interactions seems destined to yield inconclusive results. However, with a more complex three-way interaction, the proposed OJP and negative work behaviour relationship (procrastination) is demonstrated consistently across the samples.

Implications for research and practice

As our post-hoc analysis demonstrates, job passion has a “dark” side. Job passion can lead to negative work behaviours, in this case procrastination, dispelling the uniform positive assessment of passion. Studies have noted negative consequences of over-engaged sales associates (Darlan *et al.*, 2005) with limited exploration of antecedent conditions. Thus, an exploration of negative consequences of seemingly positive employee conditions such as job

| Variables | US sample ($n = 300$) | | | | | Chinese sample ($n = 300$) | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 |
| <i>Controls</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organizational size | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.01 | -0.01 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.06 |
| <i>Main effects</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| HJP | | -0.150* | -0.030 | -0.030 | -0.040 | | -0.340*** | -0.270*** | -0.280*** | -0.290*** |
| OJP | | -0.010 | -0.010 | -0.030 | -0.930 | | 0.220** | 0.220** | -0.890 | -0.890 |
| Job satisfaction | | | -0.180* | -1.590 | -0.790 | | | -0.150* | 0.580 | 1.210* |
| Salary level | | | 0.030 | -0.010 | 0.040 | | | 0.110 | 0.090 | 0.160* |
| <i>Two-way interaction effects</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| HJP \times job satisfaction | | | | -0.190* | -0.180 | | | | -0.120 | -0.150* |
| OJP \times salary level | | | | 0.040 | 0.970 | | | | 1.120* | 1.130* |
| OJP \times job satisfaction | | | | 0.070 | 2.140 | | | | 0.030 | 1.120** |
| Salary level \times Job satisfaction | | | | 1.350 | 0.570 | | | | -0.730 | -1.290* |
| <i>Three-way interaction effects</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| OJP \times salary level \times job satisfaction | | | | | -2.08** | | | | | -1.030** |
| R^2 | 0.010 | 0.030 | 0.040 | 0.070 | 0.080 | 0.010 | 0.090 | 0.110 | 0.140 | 0.170 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0 | 0.020 | 0.030 | 0.040 | 0.050 | 0 | 0.090 | 0.100 | 0.110 | 0.140 |
| ΔR^2 | 0.010 | 0.020* | 0.020 | 0.020 | 0.010 | 0.010 | 0.090*** | 0.020* | 0.030 | 0.030** |
| F | 0.860 | 4.380* | 6.800** | 8.670** | 12.640*** | 1.540 | 16.010*** | 19.240*** | 21.390*** | 30.340*** |

Note(s): Dependent variable is procrastination
 *** $p < 0.001$
 ** $p < 0.01$
 * $p < 0.05$

Table 5.
 Results of hierarchical
 linear regression
 analyses in the US and
 China samples (three-
 way moderation
 effects)

passion is warranted (Perrewé *et al.*, 2014). By using the dualistic job passion model (Vallerand and Houliort, 2003), we provide empirical cross-cultural evidence of the differential impacts of HJP in the United States and China. Thus, we contribute to the growing stream of research challenging the argument that the singular job passion construct is only predictive of positive outcomes (Ho and Pollack, 2014). Furthermore, examining the OJP, HJP and procrastination relationships, we address calls in the literature (Ho *et al.*, 2011) for further research on the behavioural outcomes of job passion.

This study also adds to the job passion literature by testing the boundary conditions of job satisfaction and salary level on the job passion–procrastination relationship. Specifically, the finding that job satisfaction and salary level in combination affect the strength of the OJP–procrastination relationship suggests that OJP is sensitive to both internal (job satisfaction) and external (salary level) motivational forces. The findings also contribute to procrastination research identifying relationships between individual characteristic variables and procrastination. The significant moderating effects of job satisfaction and salary suggest that the job passion–procrastination relationship is employee conditional.

The inclusion of HJP, OJP and job satisfaction in the same model helps distinguish passion from other motivational constructs and work attitudes. In this research, we show that job passion is distinct from extrinsic motivation through the inclusion of internal motivators, such as job satisfaction. These internal motivational forces moderate the strength of the HJP and OJP relationships. This finding provides retailers with another tool to enhance sales associate performance.

The finding that OJP results vary by country indicates that the United States and China vary dramatically on several cultural dimensions. For low OJP associates in China, neither job

Figure 3.
Moderating effect of salary level and job satisfaction on the relationship between OJP and procrastination (US sample)

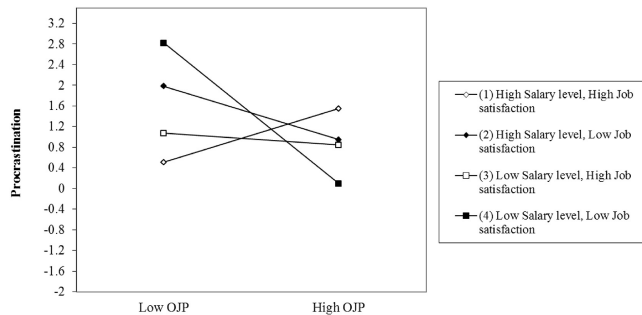
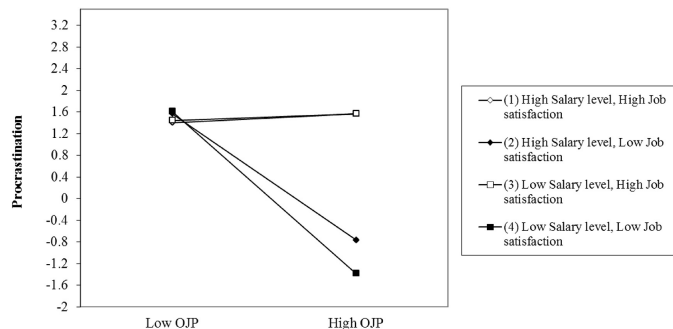


Figure 4.
Moderating effect of salary level and job satisfaction on the relationship between OJP and procrastination (China sample)



satisfaction nor salary level affects procrastination, a direct reflection of cultural orientation. China, which is high in power distance, low in individualism and low in indulgence, is a culture largely accepting of inequality, collectivism and high cynicism. Salary comparison may be ineffective as a motivational tool because earning above-standard salary levels and/or job satisfaction could be viewed as a negative. Furthermore, management's attempts to increase job satisfaction or salary level may be viewed with scepticism, which could lead to non-significant results for employees.

For retailers interested in reducing negative employee work behaviour, options emerge from our study. In both US and China samples, HJP is negatively related to procrastination, and this negative relationship strengthens as job satisfaction increases. Retailers would benefit from reviewing their sales positions and policies to help nurture job satisfaction. Considerations such as recognition, achievement, work structure, advancement and responsibility can all enhance job satisfaction (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). Retailers could also consider increasing employee empowerment (responsibility) over their scheduling, which may increase job satisfaction (DiPietro *et al.*, 2019). Certain sales associates may prefer difficult-to-fill schedule times, thus resolving managerial scheduling dilemmas and increasing employee satisfaction. Schedule empowerment, particularly for younger employees (e.g. millennials, Gen Z), supports work-life balance prized in these generations (Buzza, 2017; Carpenter and De Charon, 2014).

The interactive effects of job satisfaction, salary level and OJP also have practical implications for retailers. Procrastination in study respondents is associated with high levels of OJP in combination with low job satisfaction and low salary levels, indicating that it is the extrinsic elements associated with the position that influence negative behaviour. Therefore, even if employees still intensely like their position (OJP), extrinsic elements of the job can accelerate negative outcomes. Regular off-cycle reviews of associate performance can provide positive recognition and salary increase opportunities, thus raising intrinsic factor engagement and minimizing extrinsic factors, resulting in enhanced job satisfaction. Alternatively, indicators such as working "off the clock", taking additional shifts and bringing work home represent extrinsic motivation behaviours, limiting non-work time impeding the employees' ability to replenish self-control resources. Reducing these types of activities may help reduce a self-control failure for OJP employees leading to negative work behaviours.

Unfortunately, the initial high output of OJP associates can lead managers to identify them as "go-to" people, fuelling feelings of indispensability in the OJP condition, accelerating self-control resource depletion, resulting in employees moving faster towards self-control failure, engagement in negative work behaviours and increased intentions to leave. One benefit to managers who recognize "go-to" employees is the potential identification of excellence in specific work areas. These may be indicators of employee passion activities. Managers who identify employee work passion centres can focus more assignments into those and related work areas for the OJP employee. Focussing on employee passion work functions minimizes disliked or dispassionate work assignments which may reduce demands on self-control resources and therefore negative behaviours. Further, this focus may result in improved employee performance and enhanced job satisfaction. This along with mentorship on healthier work behaviours and providing support for work-life balance can help OJP employees find more sustainable work behaviours and support a shift towards HJP.

Limitations and future research

The cause and effect between job satisfaction and passion need further investigation as job passion can have both positive (HJP) and negative (OJP) work behaviour outcomes. Further, measuring procrastination from a self-perspective has some limitations as management can

sometimes be the blamed for procrastination itself. As with all research, this study has limitations associated with the design and sample. Whereas this study is a cross-sectional design, future research could conduct longitudinal or quasi-experimental studies to find further support for our results. The consistent outcomes across both the United States and China, however, suggest that the results are unlikely to be artefacts of the cognitive consistency in the perceptions of the employees or from common method bias.

A further limitation is the adequate tools to identify both HJP and OJP employees. It has been noted that not only is identification difficult but also identifying how job passion develops, changes and increases or decreases in intensity is little studied and presently untestable (Pollack *et al.*, 2020). Human resource development has begun work on survey methods for the workplace. To date however, these survey methods appear to provide insight into constructs which may lead to HJP/OJP but no actual survey or examination exists (Vallerand and Houliort, 2019; Zigarmi *et al.*, 2011).

The context is retail employees; therefore, generalizing beyond retail should be undertaken with caution. However, most global consumer services follow similar part-/full-time employment models represented in this study, which may make the results instructive beyond retail. Furthermore, our study focusses on full-time employees; part-time employees are likely to have less work involvement, higher negative work assessments and greater intentions to leave, and these employee types continue to grow as a percentage of employment in services. Therefore, part-time employees may exhibit even more dramatic levels of negative work behaviour, requiring urgent and serious attention. Finally, research examining HJP and OJP impacts on other negative behaviours, such as shrinkage, work-time records, employee discount use and many others, would be greatly beneficial.

Note

1. On 25 April 2017, the exchange rate between the Chinese Yuan and the US dollar was US\$1 = 6.886 CNY.

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