PERCEIVED ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AS PREDICTORS OF JOB PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS IN PAKISTAN

Umer Zaman & Muhammad Iqbal Saif

The Foundation University, Islamabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The paradigm of quantifying and managing performance is a critical component of public service organizations at the federal and provincial level in Pakistan. In this context, the current study examines the effects of perceived accountability and conflict handling techniques on job performance of public officials in Pakistan. Study data was gathered from the four Provincial Capitals including Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar and the Federal Capital i.e. Islamabad. Correlational analysis determined the relationships of the independent variables with the dependent variable. Study results confirmed that perceived accountability (r=.512, p<.01) has a significant positive relationship with job performance. Integrating style (r=.664, p<.01), compromising style (r=.508, p<.01) and obliging style (r=.501, p<.01) of conflict management were also found to have a positively significant relationship with job performance. Additionally, dominating style (r=-.372, p<.01) and avoiding style (r=-.297, p<.01) showed negative association to job performance. The overall study outcomes revealed that perceived accountability and conflict management styles could affect the behaviors in job performances of public officials in government organizations.

Keywords*: Public officials, Accountability, Conflict management, Job performance*

INTRODUCTION

International Conventions and Protocols define public official as a person who holds any administrative, executive, legislative, or judicial position in the name of the State, while performing certain public functions or delivering public services. The position may be awarded either through selection, appointment or election, with clear responsibilities and obligation to perform at any hierarchical level in a public enterprise or public agency. The position may also be attributed with or without any pecuniary benefits (United Nations Convention against Corruption, 2003 and Garner, 2009). The performance of the public officials has been seldom questioned in the past; however this dogma is confronted with enormous challenges and criticisms. Citizens have raised their demands for greater accountability of public officials for uplifting and demonstrating visible performance of public institutions (Blair 2013, Moote & McClaran 1997, Roberts, 2008).

In this regard, the job performance of the public officials in Pakistan certainly requires to be investigated by organizational researchers without alienating some of the potential predictors of job performance. Various independent studies have established that employees' performance is associated with accountability perceptions (Boone & Fulton, 1996; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999) and conflict management approaches (Hsi-An Shih & Ely Susanto, 2010; Olson-Buchanan et al., 1998; Rahim et al., 2001). The study of accountability, conflict management styles and job performance is currently a topic of considerable interest and activities within organizational research (Bentley, 2014; Brunhart, 2013; Green, 2014; Hassell, 2014; Johnson, 2014; McMillian, 2013; Redmond, 2014).

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Five strategies of conflict management have been identified by Rahim (1985) namely integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating and avoiding. Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) measures conflict management styles from the different perspectives of superiors, peers and subordinates (Ben-Yoav & Banai, 1992; Rahim, 1985). ROCI-II was structured along two dimensions which included "concern for self" and "concern for others", measuring five styles of managing conflict (Rahim, 1983, 1985). The ROCI-II instrument measured the interpersonal conflicts in three different forms. Form-A addresses conflicts with superiors; Form-B relates to conflicts with subordinates; and Form-C refers to conflicts with peers. The present study utilizes Form-B of the Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II for the purpose of assessing the conflict management styles.

The integrating style is described to demonstrate high concern for own interest and that of others. This style has also been conceptualized as problem-solving style (Blake & Mouton, 1964), confronting style (Burke, 1970) and collaborating style (Thomas, 1976). The compromising style is described to demonstrate intermediate concern for self and others interest. The obliging style is described to demonstrate low concern for own interest and high concern for others interest. Obliging style has also been conceptualized as smoothing style (Blake & Mouton, 1964), confronting style (Burke, 1970) and collaborating style (Thomas, 1976). The dominating style is described to demonstrate high concern for own interest and low concern for others interest. Avoiding style has also been conceptualized as withdrawing style (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Burke, 1970) of conflict management.

A number of studies have realized integrating style (confronting, collaborating or problem-solving approach) to be the most effective style of managing conflict, whereas the dominating style (forcing or competing approach) has been assessed to be highly

ineffective (Cetin & Hacifazliogo, 2004; Cornille, Pestle, & Vanwy 1999; Jones & White, 1985). However, some studies have recorded that a blend of different conflict management styles would result in greater effectiveness rather than accepting or ignoring a particular style (Munduate, Ganaza, Peiro, & Euwema, 1999). A balanced selection of integrating, compromising and dominating styles combined together have shown to be more effective than their individual application. This assertion is supported by Rahim (1985) who has regarded conflict management styles to be contingent to situations.

Despite integrating and compromising styles are judged to be the most relevant styles for dealing with strategic issues; however the dominating, obliging and avoiding styles could be highly beneficial while addressing tactical problems. In addition to the general acceptance of the multidimensional aspects of job performance, a composite or uni-dimensional approach to job performance is preferred while conducting research for effective decision-making within organizations (Schmidt & Kaplan, 1971). Due to the relevance and recognition of both task performance and contextual performance in empirical studies (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994), this study therefore includes these two dimensions for assessment of job performances of the public officials in Pakistan.

Borman and Motowidlo (1997) explained that contextual performance serves as a non-job specific term which carries five dimensional taxonomy including (1) continued enthusiasm and putting extra efforts to accomplish tasks successfully (2) volunteer in assuming task activities that are not formally recognized as one's own job (3) extending help and cooperation to others (4) conforming to the set rules and procedures in the organization and (5) supporting, endorsing and defending the organizational objectives. Borman, Motowidlo and Hanser (1983) presented their model of soldier's effectiveness and indicated that effectiveness aids to contextual performance. Borman, Motowidlo and Hanser (1983) concluded that the overall worth of an individual to an organization was far more than just his technical abilities. In their study, Borman, Motowidlo and Hanser (1983) recognized three factors that led to an improved organizational effectiveness namely; determination allegiance and teamwork.

Additionally, Barrick, Mount and Strauss (1993) observed that contextual performance could be better equated with the performance component such as "will-do" and it becomes more predictable through measures of personality (mainly conscientiousness), preferences, interests and rewards. Task performance has been defined as the effectiveness of the incumbents in performing their job activities which eventually contributes to their organization's technical core (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). As a result, task performance can be defined as the expertise with which the employees

undertake the job activities that are recognized as part of their job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

Task performance has also been considered to include behaviors and activities which complement the technical core functions of the organization. Sufficient skills and knowledge are required to successfully perform expected tasks when appropriate and also possess awareness of the job context to better utilize their abilities in achieving the tasks more efficiently. Borman (2006) explained that the task performance has two distinct features namely performer's behaviors or activities which are often job-specific and the performance level which predicts the level of knowledge, skill and ability of the performer. Organizations therefore formally recognize task activities by job requirements, generally and explicitly through the job descriptions. Numerous studies have also viewed that accountability has significantly positive effects on job performance (Frink & Ferris, 1999; Ranft et. al., 2007).

Based on the above review, the following hypotheses have been proposed for this study:

Hypotheses
H1. Public officials' perceived accountability and job performance are positively related.
H2. Public officials' integrating style and job performance are positively related.
H3. Public officials' compromising style and job performance are positively related.
H4. Public officials' obliging style and job performance are positively related.
H5. Public officials' dominating style and job performance are negatively related.
H6. Public officials' avoiding style and job performance are negatively related.

The relationship model of independent variables of perceived accountability, conflict management styles and the dependent variable of job performance is depicted in the following figure:
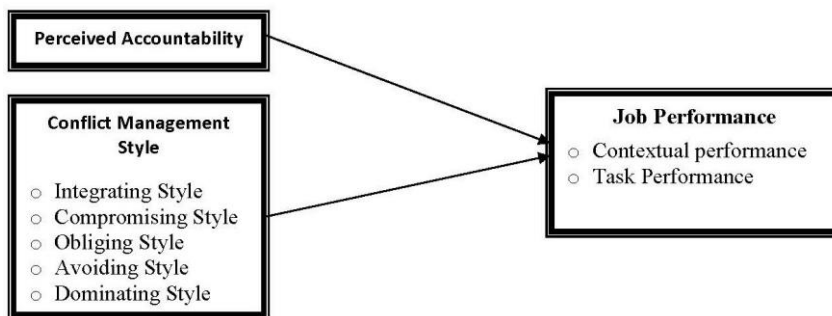

Figure 1 Relationship Model of Perceived Accountability, Conflict Management Styles and Job Performance

OPERATIONALIZATION

Perceived Accountability

The perceived accountability measure developed by Hochwarter, Kacmar and Ferris (2003) has been used in this study. The measure is constructed on an eight-item uni-dimensional scale. The measure is based on a seven-point Likert-type with reported reliability Cronbach's alpha = 0. 80.

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II)

For measuring the five different types of conflict handling (Rahim, 1983), the ROCI-II instrument has been employed for this study. The instrument is designed on a seven point Likert rating scale. The author has tested the reliability of his Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II) measure and has reported high reliability for integrating style (Cronbach's alpha=.81), compromising style (Cronbach's alpha=.75), obliging style (Cronbach's alpha=.83), dominating style (Cronbach's alpha=.84) and avoiding style (Cronbach's alpha=.84).

Contextual Performance

The current study employed the 16-item measure developed by Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994) for analyzing the contextual performance. The performance measure consists of five dimensions of contextual performance which includes: (1) volunteer in assuming task responsibilities which do not relate to formal job requirements; (2) exhibiting extra efforts and enthusiasm in accomplishing task activities; (3) extending help and cooperation to others; (4) conform to rules and procedures even if they cause personal inconvenience; and (5) sanctioning support and defend objectives of the organization. The performance measure is constructed on a 7-point Likert rating scale, ranging from 1 to 5. The instrument was originally developed for analyzing contextual performance in military settings (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994) and the instrument includes language which is not compatible with other organizational settings. For this reason, two questions specifically relating to military setting were dropped from the original instrument and adapted version of the instrument was used to suitably reflect the organizational context of the public officials in Pakistan.

Task Performance

The instrument developed by Williams and Anderson's (1991) was utilized in this study to measure the task performance. The performance measure uses a seven-point Likert type rating scale with reported high reliability Cronbach's alpha=.91.

METHODOLOGY
The target population for this study was public officials employed in Federal Government and the Provincial Governments of Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in Pakistan. The public officials were mainly serving in law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies in the four provincial capital cities in Pakistan i.e. Punjab (Lahore), Sindh (Karachi), Baluchistan (Quetta) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar) and also the Federal Capital (Islamabad) who were considered as the population for this study.

Convenience sampling method was adopted for purpose of this study keeping in mind that the use of larger sample sizes results into increased credibility and generalizability of the results (Mason, 2010). Fifteen hundred self-reporting questionnaires were evenly distributed i.e. 300 questionnaires each to the public officials in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federal Capital. The maximum numbers of questionnaires were distributed to the public officials, keeping in view that the survey might encounter high non-response rate and if there is a low non-response then this study will have an excellent sample size (Aziz, 2008). The overall response rate was 70% for the total number of questionnaires which were distributed in the four provincial capitals and the federal capital of Pakistan.

DATA ANALYSIS
Data analysis provided the relationships of the independent variables of perceived accountability and conflict management styles with job performance. Descriptive analyses and frequency distributions procedures were used to determine the scores, percentages, means and standard deviations for the study. Correlation analysis showed the statistical measurements for the relationships between the study variables (Neuman, 2006) and to determine whether statistically significant relationships existed between the public officials' perceived accountability, conflict management approaches and job performances as perceived by their direct reports (Norusis, 2000).

SPSS version 22 and AMOS were used to conduct correlational analysis and in order to test the hypothesized research model, the descriptive statistics of respondents, missing values, normality tests, outliers, linearity, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were also analyzed beforehand. SPSS version 22 and AMOS were used to analyze the demographic characteristics, and to conduct descriptive and inferential analysis.

RESULTS
Pearson Correlation analyses was conducted to test the association between the independent variables of perceived accountability (ACC), integrating style (INTG), compromising style (COMP), obliging style (OBLG), dominating style (DOMTG) and

avoiding style (AVDNG) and the dependent variable i.e. job performance (JOBPERF). The following table shows the correlational matrix of all variables included in the study. Perceived accountability showed significantly positive association with job performance (r=.512, p<.01). Moreover, the independent variables of integrating style (r=.664, p<.01), compromising style (r=.508, p<.01) and obliging styles (r=.501, p<.01) reflected significantly positive associations with job performance. In contrast, dominating style (r=-.372, p<.01) and avoiding style (r=-.297, p<.01) showed significantly negative associations with job performance.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix of all Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ACC	1						
INTG	.597[**]	1					
COMP	.562[**]	.625[**]	1				
OBLG	.597[**]	.580[**]	.647[**]	1			
DOMNTG	-.458[**]	-.473[**]	-.416[**]	-.317[**]	1		
AVDNG	-.555[**]	-.405[**]	-.468[**]	-.358[**]	.866[**]	1	
JOBPERF	.512[**]	.664[**]	.508[**]	.501[**]	-.372[**]	-.297[**]	1

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that perceived accountability has a significant positive relationship with job performance (r=.512, p<.01). Hence the public officials who sensed a greater level of accountability towards their job responsibilities and work activities are likely to show greater performance. These findings are comparable to the conclusions drawn by other authors (Brown & Leigh 1996; Brunhart, 2013; Frink & Ferris, 1999; Kim, 2003; Ranft et. al., 2007). Therefore, hypothesis one could not be rejected.

Integrating style (r=.664, p<.01), compromising style (r=.508, p<.01) and obliging style (r=.501, p<.01) showed significantly positive relationships with job performance. In contrast, dominating style (r= -.372, p<.01) and avoiding style (r= -.297, p<.01) showed significant negative relationships with job performance. Hence, the results revealed that the public officials' use of more integrating, compromising or obliging style would improve the public officials' job performance. Alternatively, public officials' use of dominating or avoiding style would be detrimental to his or her job performance. These findings confirm the theoretical foundations and conclusions based on other researches on conflict management styles and performance (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Hocker & Wilmot, 1998; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001; Norton, Parry, & Song 1994; Rahim, 2000; Rahim et al., 2001). Therefore, hypotheses H2 to H6 were not rejected.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, the generalizability of the study findings is limited. The researcher has examined the public officials who are employed in the federal and provincial governments in Pakistan mainly serving at law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies in Pakistan. Possibilities of differences may exist in the selected public sector organizations and other public organizations operating in Pakistan. Therefore, the findings of this study should be cautiously interpreted for public officials who hold any administrative, executive, legislative, or judicial positions.

Secondly, the study is based on data collected through self-reported questionnaires that may increase the risk of the study participants for not responding accurately, honestly or completely on the survey form as self-reported questionnaires have been documented for known limitations (Aiman-Smith & Markham, 2004). This study utilized the convenient sampling approach which may weaken the external validity (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Finally, any outside variables affecting the study results could not be discounted.

However, a variety of avenues are open for making further advancement in future researches. Future researches may focus on the effectiveness of different conflict management approaches and determining what specific conditions or factors influence the conflict management behavior of managers and their consequent job performances. Also the future researches may consider using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods and may expand theory through ethnographic or grounded theory approaches.

REFERENCES

Aiman-Smith, L., & Markham, S. K. (2004). What you should know about using surveys. *Research Technology Management,* 47(3), 12–15.

Aziz, O. (2008). An analytical study of the impact of perception of leadership styles on job satisfaction within the Turkish national police based on the multifactor leadership questionnaire. *Doctoral Dissertation available from Proquest Dissertations & Theses Global*.

Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., & Strauss, J. P. (1993). Conscientiousness and performance of sales representatives: test of the mediating effects of goal setting. *Journal of Applied Psychology.* 78. 715-722.

Bentley, J. R. (2014). Expanding the will at work: The effects of transformational leadership and workplace deviance on follower work self-expansion, work self-regulatory strength, and job performance (3629668). *Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.* (1562515341).

Ben-Yoav, O., & Banai, M. (1992). Measuring conflict management styles: A comparison between the MODE and ROCI-II instrument using self and peer ratings. *The International Journal of Conflict Management,* 3(3), 237-247.

Blair, D. G. (2013). Commentary: The role of role clarity remains unclear. *Public Administrative Review,* 73 (5): 725–726.

Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). The managerial grid. Houston, Texas: Gulf.

Boone, H. N., & Fulton, B. A. (1996). Implementing performance-based measures in community corrections. Retrieved March 6, 2013, from http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdf_files/ perform.pdf

Borman, W. C. (2006). The Concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 13, 238-241.

Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the Criterion Domain to Include Elements of Contextual Performance. In N. Schmitt, & W. C. Borman (Eds.),*Personnel Selection in Organizations* (71-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1997). Task performance and contextual performance: The meaning for personnel selection research. *Human Performance,* (2), 99-109.

Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J., & Hanser, L. M. (1983). A model of individual performance effectiveness: Thoughts about expanding the criterion space. In Integrated criterion measurement for large scale computerized selection and classification. *Symposium presented at the 91st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.*

Brown, S. P., & Leigh, T. W. (1996). A new look at psychological climate and its relationship to job involvement, effort, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 358-368.

Brunhart, A.D. (2013). The relationship between felt accountability and perceived overall organizational performance in federal agencies (3554024). *Available from Pro-Quest Dissertations & Theses Global.*

Burke, R. J. (1970). Methods of resolving superior-subordinate conflict: The constructive use of subordinate differences and disagreement. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 5,* 393-411.

Cetin, M. O., & Hacifazlioglu, O. (2004). Academics' conflict management styles. *Dogus Universitesi Dergisi, 5(2),* 155-162. Retrieved from   http://journal.dogus.edu.tr/ 13026739/ 2004/ cilt5/sayi2/M00114.pdf.

Cohen, S. G., & Bailey, D. E. (1997). What makes teams work: Group effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite. *Journal of Management*, 23: 239-290.

Cornille, T. A., Pestle, R. E., & Vanwy, R. W. (1999). Teachers' conflict management style with peers and students' parents. *The International Journal of Conflict Management,* 10(1), 69-79.

Frink, D. D., & Ferris, G. R. (1999). The moderating effects of accountability on the conscientiousness-performance relationship. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 13, 515-524.

Garner, B. A. (2009). Black's law dictionary ninth edition. New York, NY: Thomas Reuters Westlaw.

Green, W. L. (2014). Empirical correlation among transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership: Comparisons, arguments, and relationship with perceived leadership style (3612088). *Available from Pro-Quest Dissertations & Theses Global.*

Hassell, K. (2014). Perceived leadership style dissimilarity and leader turnover intentions at a nonprofit healthcare organization (3666967). *Available from Pro-Quest Dissertations & Theses Global.* (1641121528)

Hochwarter, W. A., Kacmar, C. J., & Ferris, G. R. (2003). *Accountability at work: An examination of antecedents and consequences.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Orlando, FL.

Hocker, J. L., & Wilmot, W. W. (1998). Interpersonal conflict (5th ed.). Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark.

Hsi-An Shih., & Ely Susanto, (2010). Conflict management styles, emotional intelligence, and job performance in public organizations. *International Journal of Conflict Management,* 21 (2), 147-168.

Johnson, N. L. (2014). Differences between generational cohort, conflict management style, and leadership style of managers in healthcare administration (3641218). *Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.*

Jones, R. E., & White, C. S. (1985). Relationships among personality, conflict resolutions styles, and task effectiveness. *Group and organization studies,* 10(2), 152-167.

Kim, S. (2003). The effects of situational factors and perceived accountability on contextual performan*ce* (3092444). Available from *Pro-Quest Dissertations & Theses Global.*

Lerner, J., & Tetlock, P. (1999). Accounting for the effects of accountability. *Psychological Bulletin,* 125(2), 255-275.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in Ph.D. studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 11(3), 8-35.

McMillian, L. (2013). Neuroticism and the leadership competencies of transactional and transformational leadership (3560126). *Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.* (1355751954).

Montoya-Weiss, M.M., Massey, A.P., & Song, M. (2001). Getting it together: Temporal coordination and conflict management in global virtual teams. *Academy of Management Journal,* 44(6), 1251-1262.

Moote, Margaret A., & McClaran P. M. (1997). Implications of Participatory Democracy for Public Land Planning. *Journal of Range Management* 50 (5), 473–81.

Motowidlo, S. J., & Van Scotter, J. R. (1994). Evidence that task performance should be distinguished from contextual performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 79, 475-480.

Munduate, L., Ganaza, J., Peiro, J. M., & Euwema, M. (1999). Patterns of styles in conflict management and effectiveness. *The International Journal of Conflict Management,* 10(1), 5-24.

Neuman, W. L. (2006). Social research methods*: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Norton, J., Parry, M. E., & Song, X. Michael. (1994). Integrating R&D and Marketing: A Comparison of Practices in the Japanese and American Chemical Industries. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management,* 41 (1): 5-20.

Norusis, M. J. (2000). SPSS 10.0: Guide to Data Analysis. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Olson-Buchanan, J. B., Drasgow, F., Moberg, P. J., Mead, A. D., Keenan, P. A., & Donovan, M. A. (1998). An interactive video assessment of conflict resolution skills. *Personnel Psychology,* 51(1), 1-24.

Rahim, M. A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 126, 79-86.

Rahim, M. A. (1985). A strategy for managing conflict in complex organizations. *Human Relations,* 38(1), 81-89.

 Rahim, M. A. (2000). Empirical Studies on Managing Conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 11 (1), 5 – 8

Rahim, M. A., Antonioni, D., Psenicka, C. (2001). A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates' styles of handling conflict, and job performance. *International Journal of Conflict Management,* 12 (3), 191-211.

Ranft, A., Ferris, G. R., & Perryman, A. (2007). Dealing with celebrity and accountability in the top job. *Human Resource Management*, 46, 671-682.

Redmond, V. V. M. (2014). Examining the relationships between conflict management styles, upward dissent tactics, and leader-member-social-exchange (3647683). *Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*. (1643246424).

Roberts, N. C. (2008). The Age of Direct Citizen Participation. ASPA Classics. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Schmidt, F. R., & Kaplan, L. B. (1971). Composite versus multiple criteria: A review and resolution of the controversy. *Personnel Psychology*, 24, 419-434.

Singleton, R., & Straits, B. (2010). Approaches to social research. New York, NY: *Oxford University Press*.

Thomas, K. W. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Palo Alto CA: Consulting Psychologist Press.

United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003). UN General Assembly, Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/ Publications /Convention /08-50026_E.pdf

Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management, 17(3)*, 601-617.