



The significance of mutual recognition respect in mediating the relationships between trait emotional intelligence, affective commitment and job satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

There has been limited research to date exploring the significance of a form of respect referred to as mutual recognition respect within manager and subordinate relationships. Based on data collected from 203 manager-subordinate dyads within the Insurance industry in Malaysia, we examine the effects of mutual recognition respect on subordinate affective commitment and job satisfaction. As theorised, high and shared recognition respect in relationships (mutual recognition respect) was found to positively predict these workplace attitudes. In addition, both manager and subordinate trait emotional intelligence were positively associated with mutual recognition respect. In relationships characterised as having low mutual recognition respect, the model demonstrated a much poorer fit to the data and trait-El was not found to have a significant effect in this model. Our findings suggest mutual recognition respect can have both organizational and individual benefits and selection methods that assess trait-El may help to enhance mutual recognition respect within the workplace.

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1. Introduction

A number of studies have found respect to be associated with individuals' self-esteem and well-being, as well as physical and mental health in the workplace (Huo, Binning, & Molina, 2010; Oore et al., 2010). Respect has also been found to be associated with important outcomes traditionally studied in organizational behaviour, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behaviour and turnover (Faulkner & Laschinger, 2008; Sleebos, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 2006; Ulrich, Buerhaus, Donelan, & Dittus, 2005).

Lacking to date however, has been the incorporation of differing notions of respect as conceptualised within the ethics literature to inform research on respect more generally within the psychology literatures (Clarke, 2011; Grover, 2013). In the ethics literature, an important distinction has been highlighted between what is seen as recognition and appraisal forms of respect (Benditt, 2008). Few studies to date have investigated the recognition form of respect. In an experimental study, Renger and Simon (2011) found social recognition by group members as an equal was associated with the experience of respect. This was then associated with higher motivation and task performance mediated through collective identification. More recently, research investigating

the mutual recognition form of respect between managers and their subordinates has demonstrated that it is empirically distinct from the appraisal form of respect, and predicted employee well-being as well as job performance. By contrast appraisal respect was only found to predict job performance (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015). Of note, recent research suggests that the ways particular types of respect come about can differ, as well as independently predict a range of outcomes (Huo et al., 2010).

This paper takes this work forward in two ways. First we examine whether a form of respect referred to as mutual recognition respect predicts employee job satisfaction and affective commitment in the workplace. These relationships have not been looked at in research to date. Second, this is the first study to examine individual characteristics potentially predictive of mutual recognition respect. Specifically, we investigate the extent to which manager and subordinate trait emotional intelligence contribute to mutual recognition respect in these workplace relationships. On a practical level, our study suggests selection methods incorporating tests for trait EI could help improve recognition respect in the workplace.

2. Mutual recognition respect

Appraisal respect connotes the form of respect that originates in individuals' assessments of each others' capabilities or "worth" (Cranor, 1975). Liden and Maslyn (1998) are referring to appraisal respect when they define respect as, "mutual respect for the capabilities of the other". Delellis (2000) points out that the notion of appraisal respect

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has dominated Western conceptualisations of respect based upon attributes of an individual's "worthiness". Recognition respect is different in that it arises out of judgements we make based on some feature of the judgement target being morally correct, unbiased, or fair (Atwell, 1981). In contrast to appraisal respect, this form of respect has its origins in moral reasoning (Cranor, 1975).

Whereas appraisal respect denotes the idea that we need to prove our worthiness to others, recognition respect is due to an individual as a fundamental, unconditional human right (Kant, 1964). It suggests that people should be treated fairly as this is morally correct behaviour (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Research in interpersonal relationships has also suggested that it is the mutual quality of the relationship between people that is significant in bringing about feelings of self-validation and enhances social ties (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). We argue that mutual recognition respect is a relational property, and that there are important benefits that accrue to individuals as a result of the interdependence they feel from one another. This implies more than a social exchange based upon what is owed or what is received. Instead, it captures the notion that psychological growth occurs through the relationship (Miller, 1986). Genero et al. (1992) go as far as to suggest that relationships that are one-sided ultimately result in lower self-esteem or even shame. The mutual presence of this form of respect is argued to be a key condition in order for interpersonal relationships to grow and develop (Honneth, 1995). Thus, it is not only recognition respect, but the mutuality of recognition respect that we argue here serves an important function in the workplace.

3. Theory & hypotheses

3.1. Trait EI and mutual recognition respect

Emotional intelligence has been defined as an individual's capacity to process emotional information in an accurate manner and use that information both to inform their cognition and regulate their and others' emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). The construct has been viewed either as a set of abilities (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) or alternatively a set of personality characteristics or behavioural tendencies referred to as trait-EI (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). Schutte, Malouff, and Bhullar (2009) argue that ability and trait conceptualisations of emotional intelligence may be complementary aspects of adaptive emotional functioning. Individuals with high levels of trait emotional intelligence have more rewarding interpersonal relationships and demonstrate more prosocial behaviours (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007). This should predispose them toward showing recognition respect for persons. We now put forward a number of arguments to theoretically support this position. First, trait emotional intelligence has been found to be negatively associated with victimization and bullying (Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011), behaviours that are characterised by low levels of respect for persons (Morrison, 2006). Second, an important aspect of trait emotional intelligence is self-awareness (Schutte et al., 1998). Self-awareness involves "reflecting on one's unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents and/or capabilities" to gain a more in-depth understanding of the self (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005, p349). Trait emotional intelligence may underpin recognition respect because it enables individuals to see that they are far similar to each other than previously thought, based upon a common humanity.

Next, supervisors with high trait emotional intelligence are more sensitive to the emotions of subordinates and more likely to treat them in ways which confers them psychological benefits such as acceptance and approval (Wong & Law, 2002). These are key aspects of recognition respect. Trait emotional intelligence also enables a supervisor to take the perspective of their subordinate to understand their point of view. This is also an attribute of recognition respect (Druskat & Wolff, 2002).

Finally, trait emotional intelligence has been found to be positively associated with empathy (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2006). Empathy has been shown to convey unconditional positive regard and non-judgemental attitudes in therapeutic relationships (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Rogers, 1965). These are similarly aspects of recognition respect identified in the literature (Honneth, 1995).

Hypothesis 1. Manager and subordinate trait emotional intelligence will be positively related to mutual recognition respect.

3.2. Mutual recognition respect and affective commitment

Theories of self-construal suggest that positive evaluations of the self are fostered through the interactions one has with others (Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Mutual recognition respect indicates inclusion and acceptance which according to relational identity theory (Shapiro, 2010) satisfies basic needs for affiliation we derive from relationships. This promotes positive affect associated with feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1988). Based on social exchange theory, individuals respond to these intangible benefits by increasing their affective commitment to the organization. The increased self-esteem arising from mutual recognition respect promotes a positive psychological state and meets needs that will enhance subordinates' identification with the organization. Supporting this proposition, research has shown self-esteem to be positively related to affective commitment (Lee & Peccei, 2007; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Hypothesis 2. Mutual recognition respect will be positively related to affective commitment.

3.3. Mutual recognition respect and job satisfaction

Drawing upon Judge and colleagues work on core self-evaluations (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998), increased self-esteem is associated with greater optimism and perseverance in the face of difficulties. These make greater success and job satisfaction more likely (Dodgson & Wood, 1998). The positive self-evaluations arising from mutual recognition respect should therefore be expected to influence job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Mutual recognition respect will be positively related to job satisfaction.

4. Method

4.1. Sample and procedure

Data were collected from a large insurance organization with 615 offices in Malaysia using a self-administered postal survey. We contacted the general manager of the HR department, who then provided us with contact details of the senior manager located in each of the branch offices. Senior managers were then responsible for distributing a survey packet to one middle manager and one of their direct reports. Manager and subordinate dyad questionnaires were given matched codes so we could undertake appropriate data analyses. Participants were offered the opportunity to enter a lucky draw to win a local store voucher as an incentive. The questionnaire was translated into the Malay language by the researcher following the back-translation method (Brislin, 1980). A professional translator who was blind to this study was then hired to translate the Malay version questionnaire back into English. Then, a comparison was made between the back-translation and the original version of the questionnaire. This did not indicate any significant translation problems. In order to minimise problems associated with common method variance, we asked managers and their subordinates to complete measures of trait EI and mutual recognition respect first.

This was followed by asking subordinates to complete measures of affective commitment and job satisfaction two months later. We received responses from 203 identical matched manager-subordinate pairs (33% response rate). Just over half the sample of managers, 110 (54%) were male. The vast majority of managers 180 (89%) were aged between 31 and 50, with the remaining 23 (11%) aged 51 or over. 123 (63%) of managers had been working with the current organization for >5 years. 140 (69%) subordinates were female. 65 (32%) were aged 30 or under, 133 (66%) aged between 31 and 50, with 4 (2%) aged 51 or over. The length of time managers had been supervising the subordinate varied as follows: 32 (16%) was <1 year; 47 (23%) was between 1 and 3 years; 49 (24%) was between 3 and 5 years; and 75 (37%) was more than five years. 85 (42%) of subordinates had been working with the current organization for more than five years and 63 (31%) had been in the job role for more than five years.

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Mutual recognition respect

The 8-item Mutual Recognition Respect Scale (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015) was used to assess manager and subordinate perceptions of recognition respect in their relationship. Sample items include “we value each other simply because as people we deserve it” and “we demonstrate sensitivity to each others' personal or moral beliefs”. This is a 7-point Likert scale where responses ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. We obtained good reliabilities for the scale for both managers ($\alpha = 0.92$) and subordinates ($\alpha = 0.90$).

4.2.2. Trait emotional intelligence

The 33-item Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte et al., 1998; Schutte et al., 2009) was used to measure trait emotional intelligence using a 5-point Likert Scale. The scale assesses how effectively respondents typically identify, understand, regulate, and harness emotions in themselves and others. Sample items include, “I know when to talk about my personal problems to others” and “When my mood changes, I see new possibilities”. In previous research the scale was found to have an internal consistency of between 0.87 and 0.90, a two-week test-retest reliability of 0.78, and evidence of construct validity through association with related constructs (Schutte et al., 1998; Schutte et al., 2009). We obtained good reliabilities for the scale for both managers ($\alpha = 0.87$) and subordinates ($\alpha = 0.88$).

4.2.3. Affective commitment

3-Items were used from Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) 7-point affective commitment scale were used to assess affective commitment. Sample items include “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me” and “I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own” ($\alpha = 0.87$).

4.2.4. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using Schriesheim and Tsui's (1980) six-item scale. Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with aspects of their job on a 5-point Likert scale. Sample items include “How satisfied are you with your current job” and “How satisfied are you with your current salary” Coefficient alphas ranging from 0.73 to 0.78 have been reported in earlier studies (Tsui, Egan, & O'reilly, 1992). ($\alpha = 0.81$).

4.2.5. Control variables

4.2.5.1. Gender. Both managers' and subordinates' gender has been found to predict the quality of their relationships (McCull-Kennedy & Anderson, 2005). We therefore controlled for gender similarity by dummy coding same gender as 0 and different gender as 1.

4.2.5.2. Length of relationship. We also controlled for the length of time the manager had been supervising their subordinate.

4.2.6. Data analysis

We began initial tests using simple raw score correlation analyses to examine the relationships between recognition respect, trait-EI, affective commitment and job satisfaction. The next step in our analyses was to test whether mutual recognition respect should be properly considered a dyadic level measure. To do this we used Within and Between Analysis (WABA). We adopted an identical procedure to Markham, Yammarino, Murry, and Palanski (2010), in splitting manager and subordinate scores on mutual recognition respect at the relevant medians to determine whether a match occurred in manager-subordinate dyad measures of mutual recognition respect. We categorised scores as matched where both manager and subordinate scores were both above their medians. Conversely, where one partner's score indicated high whilst the other indicated low, this was labelled a mismatch. If both scores were below the median we characterised these as having low recognition respect and included these in the mismatch group (low mutual recognition respect). We then tested our hypotheses using both sets of data.

5. Results

5.1. Raw score inter-correlations

Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics and raw score inter-correlations. Manager trait EI was positively and significantly correlated with subordinate trait EI, manager mutual recognition respect, subordinate job satisfaction and affective commitment. Subordinate trait EI was similarly positively and significantly correlated with subordinate mutual recognition respect, job satisfaction and their affective commitment. Both manager and subordinate mutual recognition respect are also positively correlated with subordinate affective commitment and job satisfaction.

5.2. The measurement model

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis testing for a unitary factor structure of the recognition respect measure, with all eight recognition respect items loading on to one latent factor. Our results indicated an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 60.21$, $df = 9$; $p < 0.000$; CFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06). We then tested for the distinctiveness of all the constructs included in our study (mutual recognition respect, manager and subordinate trait emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and affective commitment) by loading all scale items on to their respective factors. Our results demonstrated a satisfactory fit for our model ($\chi^2 = 521.25$, $df = 265$; $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06) and meet the minimum criteria (0.06, RMSEA and 0.95 CFI) for acceptable errors of approximation (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

5.3. The dyadic nature of mutual recognition respect

The results of our single level relationship analysis to test whether mutual recognition respect should be treated as a dyadic level measure are displayed in Table 2. Our findings show that where managers and subordinates are in agreement about (high) mutual recognition respect in their relationship (agreement above the median), then the effects of mutual recognition respect are stronger at the between rather than within groups level of analysis. Whilst when a mismatch occurs between managers and subordinates (or mutuality is low), then within dyad effects are stronger. This is further supported by the geometrical-based tests of practical significance (E and A tests; Dansereau, Alutto, & Yammarino, 1984). Based on these findings we concluded

Table 1
Inter-correlations between study variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age M	-	-	-										
2. Age S	-	-	0.29**	-									
3. Gender M	-	-	-0.00	-0.06	-								
4. Gender S	-	-	-0.05	-0.13	0.30**	-							
5. Length of relationship with supervisor	-	-	0.21**	0.31**	0.00	0.04	-						
6. Mutual recognition respect M	31.10	4.88	-0.06	0.00	-0.04	-0.10	0.06	($\alpha = 0.92$)					
7. Mutual recognition respect S	31.10	6.50	-0.07	0.06	-0.17*	-0.13	-0.01	0.26**	($\alpha = 0.90$)				
8. Trait EI M	129.46	11.98	0.10	0.04	0.08	-0.02	-0.01	0.45**	0.10	($\alpha = 0.87$)			
9. Trait EI S	128.72	12.76	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.08	-0.07	0.03	0.29**	0.23**	($\alpha = 0.88$)		
10. Job satisfaction	22.03	3.38	0.02	0.13	-0.10	-0.05	0.03	0.13	0.37**	0.14*	0.30**	($\alpha = 0.81$)	
11. Affective commitment	14.42	3.63	-0.04	0.08	-0.12	-0.11	0.07	0.24**	0.42**	0.20**	0.29**	0.46**	($\alpha = 0.87$)

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

that mutual recognition respect should be treated as a dyadic level construct.

5.4. Hypothesis testing

In our further analyses we used manager measures of mutual recognition respect to minimise CMV. We used AMOS v21 to undertake structural equation modeling in order to test the mediating effects of mutual recognition respect between manager, and subordinate trait-EI and both job satisfaction and affective commitment. For parsimony we decided to parcel our items on our trait EI constructs, creating 4 new items by summing each successive 8 items then finally 9 items from our 33 item measure. Our results for matched high mutual recognition respect between managers and subordinates are displayed in Fig. 1. The model demonstrated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 499.82$, $df = 270$; $p < 0.000$; CFI = 0.90, NFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.06). In support of Hypothesis 1, the standardised path coefficients between manager trait EI ($\beta = 0.60$; $p < 0.05$) and subordinate trait EI ($\beta = 0.11$; $p < 0.001$) and mutual recognition respect were both significant. The standardised path coefficients between mutual recognition respect and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.74$; $p < 0.001$), and between mutual recognition respect and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.15$; $p < 0.001$) were also significant. Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also therefore supported.

We also ran a second set of analyses using measures collected from relationships categorised as having a low shared mutual recognition respect which we labelled mismatch. The model demonstrated a poorer fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 480.38$, $df = 270$; $p < 0.000$; CFI = 0.74, NFI =

0.57, TLI = 0.71, RMSEA = 0.08). As can be seen in Fig. 2, most of the significant relationships previously found were no longer present. The only significant relationship we found was between mutual recognition respect and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.08$; $p < 0.05$).

6. Discussion

Our first key finding is that high mutual recognition respect between managers and subordinates is positively associated with subordinates' job satisfaction and affective commitment. Grover (2014), suggests that both appraisal and recognition forms of respect bring about their wider effects through self-esteem, but that recognition respect has a more fundamental effect since it affects core identity concerns more significantly. The positive relationships between mutual recognition respect and both affective commitment and job satisfaction is therefore theoretically consistent with empirical work showing relationships between self-esteem and both these outcome variables (Judge & Bono, 2001; Lee & Peccei, 2007).

Although relational aspects of the self, capturing mutuality have been more explicitly suggested in areas such as person-organization fit, they have tended to be neglected from most research examining how the nature of workplace relationships affects employee outcomes (c.f. Bowling, Beehr, & Swader, 2005). In studies of the psychological contract for example, it is generally just the employee's perception of the relationship that is typically looked at (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). The same could be said for much of the research that has social exchange theory as its basis, such as positive organizational support or

Table 2
Dyads: contrast of conditions with mutual recognition respect (MRR) match and mismatched reports for MRR-trait EI relationships.

Dyads	Total corr.	WABA I: variation source					WABA II: covariation source					Cumulative components		
		Eta		Ratio		Infer	Correlation		Ratio		Infer	Bet	With	Infer
		Bet.	With.	E	F		Bet.	With.	A	Z				
Condition 1: matching perceptions about MRR														
Mutual recognition respect (MRR)		0.90*	0.43	2.10 ^a	4.41***	Between dyad								
Trait EI		0.80	0.60	1.32 ^b	1.75***	Between dyad								
MRR × Trait EI	0.42***					Equiv.	0.44	0.38	0.07	0.63	Equiv.	0.32	0.10	Equiv.
Condition 2: mismatched perceptions about MRR														
Mutual recognition respect (MRR)		0.43	0.90	0.47 ^a	4.38***	Within dyads								
Trait EI		0.74	0.67	1.10	1.23 ^{ns}									
MRR × Trait EI	-0.27**						0.67	0.85	-0.34 ^b	-1.77	Within dyads	-0.02	0.25	Equiv.

Degrees of freedom: MRR match N = 302 individuals J = 151 dyads; degrees of freedom: MRR mismatch N = 104 individuals J = 52 dyads.

^a Significant by the 30° test.
^b Significant by the 15° test.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

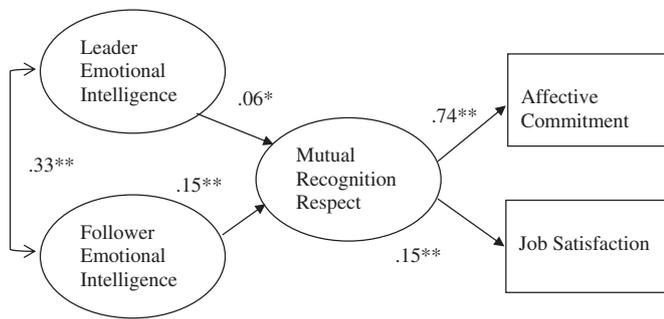


Fig. 1. Structural model with path coefficients for matched mutual recognition respect with trait EI and dependent variables.

manager-member exchange (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Elsewhere however, the importance of mutuality has long been recognised in studies of close or intimate personal relationships (Genero et al., 1992; Denissen, Marcel, & Dubas, 2009). Our findings show that both manager and subordinate trait-EI have independent effects in contributing to mutual recognition respect and the predictive power of the construct is derived from both parties in the relationship.

Our finding that both manager and subordinate trait-EI contribute independently to high mutual recognition respect is significant, in that it suggests personality-related factors can have a bearing on how mutual recognition respect is supported within organizations. Although many workplaces have sought to implement respect enhancing workplaces through HR policies particularly in the areas of diversity, this finding suggests that organizations can focus on selection as an additional mechanism for helping to bring about greater recognition respect between managers and those that report to them. Selecting managers and employees with high trait EI may be one such approach. In addition, although training may not affect trait-EI, it may well enhance EI abilities that are associated with trait-EI (Clarke, 2010). Training interventions that target EI abilities may therefore offer an additional means for enhancing mutual recognition respect.

6.1. Future research and limitations

Future research is needed to explore further antecedents and outcomes arising from mutual recognition respect in workplace relationships. Although we focused here on the relationships between managers and subordinates, we need to examine whether trait-EI between colleagues has similar effects on mutual recognition respect. Other aspects of personality may also influence mutual recognition respect. Given that both the big 5 dimension of agreeableness and recognition respect capture positive orientations toward people, agreeableness like trait-EI may be a further individual characteristic that positively predicts mutual recognition respect.

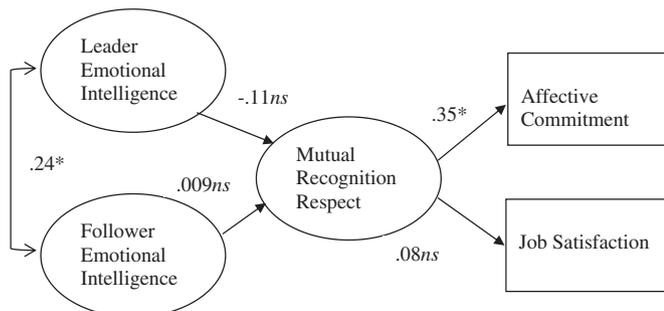


Fig. 2. Structural model with path coefficients for mismatched mutual recognition respect with trait EI and dependent variables.

Studies now need to conduct further work examining how mutual recognition respect relates to other outcomes important in the workplace. We did not include a measure of appraisal respect in this study. Comparative studies to examine both the appraisal and recognition forms of respect in studies and their effects on differing variables (e.g., work engagement, knowledge sharing, turnover intention, work-life balance) would be helpful in shedding new insights on the theoretical mechanisms underpinning these different forms of respect. For example, it would be helpful to know which of these two forms of respect are stronger predictors of job satisfaction and affective commitment in the workplace.

The significance of context highlights the first limitation of our study. Samples in our study were from Malaysia which may have influenced our findings. Malaysia is characterised as having a strong “face saving” ethos underpinning interpersonal interactions. This minimises behaviours likely to embarrass an individual with direct disagreement as it is believed that this will reduce the harmony of relationships. The mutual recognition form of respect is therefore likely to be highly significant within this cultural context and may have accounted for the highly significant relationships we obtained. Future studies should examine relationships between mutual recognition respect and work-related attitudes in other cultural contexts.

Next, the collection of cross-sectional data precludes making definitive statements regarding the direction of the relationships examined. To minimise the effects of CMV we followed recommendations by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Lee (2003) and attempted to separate the measures psychologically by requiring respondents to log into two separate questionnaires with different survey website addresses. We also ensured a temporal separation of measures with respondents providing independent and dependent scales two months apart.

7. Conclusions

We found mutual recognition respect between managers and their subordinates was positively associated with subordinate satisfaction and their affective commitment. Both manager and subordinate trait-emotional intelligence contributed independently to mutual recognition respect. Our findings support a small but growing body of literature suggesting that this form of respect is likely to have important effects in the workplace.

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