

THE IMPACT OF CONFUCIAN TRADITIONAL VALUES ON THE COOPERATION BEHAVIOR OF EMPLOYEES IN CHINESE AVIATION ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT

The success and competitiveness of aviation enterprises are intimately linked to the cooperative behavior of their employees. In the aviation industry, where safety and customer satisfaction are paramount, employee cooperation directly influences these critical aspects. The objectives of this study were to explore 1) the effects of employee demographics, including gender, age, educational level, marital status, and working duration, and 2) the influence of Confucian traditional values on the cooperative behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises. The Confucian traditional values in this study were obedience to authority, tolerance and altruism, acceptance of authority, and saving face. The study adopts a quantitative research design utilizing online questionnaires distributed to 400 front-line employees of modern Chinese aviation enterprises. The statistics used to analyze the data were descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, including an independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and multiple linear regression at the statistically significant level of 0.05. The hypothesis found that all demographic characteristics affect the employee's cooperative behavior. Obedience to authority, tolerance and altruism, and saving face influence employees' cooperative behavior with multiple correlations (R) = .510 and the ability to predict analytical equations of 25.40%.

Keywords:

Aviation enterprises; Employee cooperation behavior; Confucian values

INTRODUCTION

Aviation enterprises' success and overall competitiveness are intricately woven with their employees' performance and cooperative behavior. As the aviation industry experiences rapid expansion and development, the importance of employee cooperation behavior extends beyond mere productivity and quality, directly impacting aviation safety and customer satisfaction. In the aviation sector, the safety and well-being of passengers and cargo are at the forefront of concerns, emphasizing the paramount importance of this behavior. Therefore, understanding and improving employee cooperation behavior in this dynamic and high-risk environment are the focal points of this research. Despite numerous studies focusing on employee cooperation behavior and its influencing factors (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993), there is a need for a more in-depth and specific exploration of how to encourage employees to practice more cooperative behavior,

especially in specific contexts such as the aviation industry characterized by high risk and pressure.

This study considers cultural values, especially Confucian cultural values in China, and their impact on the cooperative behavior of employees in aviation enterprises. Confucian values emphasize core elements such as interpersonal relationships, moral values, and social responsibility (Sun, Li & Wei, 2016). Chinese individuals exhibit respect and obedience to authority, prioritize interpersonal relationships, and maintain harmony in relationships with relatives, acquaintances, and strangers (Wang & Zhang, 2015). However, Confucian traditional values not only influence individual value orientations and behavioral guidelines but also permeate organizational culture and employee behavior to some extent (Huang & Zhou, 2019). Therefore, Confucian values may significantly impact the cooperative behavior of employees in the aviation industry, and several important questions need to be answered.

Research Questions

1. How do the employee demographics affect the cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises?
2. How do traditional Confucian values (e.g., obedience to authority, tolerance and altruism, acceptance of authority, and saving face) influence the cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises?

Research Objectives

This study aimed to unveil the relationship between traditional Confucian values and the cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises and to provide valuable strategies for human resource management in Chinese aviation enterprises. The research objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To explore the effects of employee demographics, including gender, age, educational level, marital status, and working duration on the cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises.
2. To study the influence of Confucian traditional values on the cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises.

Research Hypotheses

H1: The difference in demographic factors, including gender, age, marital status, educational background, and duration of service affect employee cooperation behavior differently.

H2: The Confucian traditional values influence employee cooperation behavior of employees in Chinese aviation enterprises

Confucian Traditional Values

Confucianism's core moral values consist of nine aspects: *benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, trustworthiness, forgiveness, loyalty, filial piety, and fraternal respect*. Among them, benevolence is the core value that permeates and guides others. Confucian benevolence is founded on family ethics (Yang, 1993). Individuals are initially expected to love their family and then extend this love to their social circles. These relationships define and regulate individuals' duties, responsibilities, and virtues. In these relationships, Individuals start learning predetermined roles and associated virtues from childhood. This learning typically occurs through various socialization processes and corresponding control and punishment mechanisms (Gabrenya, 1996).

Confucian ethical relationships emphasize interdependence rather than emphasizing the "independent self" (Huang, 1995). This relationship orientation is manifested in five

aspects: "relation role differentiation," "relation reciprocity," "relation fatalism," "relation determinism," and "relation harmony". Individuals adopt different interaction principles and methods based on different relationship levels (Yang, 1993). The concept of "Gaisu Grid," as Fei (1947) described, illustrates those Chinese social relationships akin to ripples from a stone thrown into the water. The central stone represents the individual, while the ripples symbolize the layers of relationships expanding outward with increasing intimacy.

The essence of the Confucian spirit is reflected in the relationship with authority figures and others. The ultimate goal of both types is to establish harmonious relations with relevant groups. Authority orientation defines the fundamental principles by which Chinese individuals establish stable and harmonious relationships with authority figures. In contrast, altruistic orientation indicates how Chinese individuals interact with members of society beyond their families. Whether dealing with authority figures or others, the Chinese adhere to the principle of "face" to achieve the goal of harmonious coexistence. Suppose others show respect, care, attention, and fair treatment to an individual; that individual gains a social reputation, with "face" representing this social standing (Hwang, 1987). Therefore, Confucian thought can be summarized as a value system with relationships encompassing authority orientation, tolerance, altruism, and the principle of "face."

Confucian Traditional Values in the Workplace

In the workplace context, Confucian traditional values manifest primarily in individuals placing great importance on immediate and long-term relationships between themselves and the organization (Hwang, 2000). To maintain harmonious relationships with the organization and its members, individuals apply Confucianism's virtues by extending their love for their families to their colleagues, superiors, and the organization (Yang, 1993). They prioritize collective interests and avoid actions that might damage relationships with the organization, even when the organization's actions may appear unfair.

Furthermore, in alignment with Confucian traditional values, organizations and their representatives are regarded as authorities whose decisions and actions should be followed and accepted to the greatest extent, even if they are not in an individual's favor. Obedience to authority is demonstrated through respect and reverence for authority figures, seeking guidance from leaders in essential matters, and giving elder colleagues a say in decision-making. Acceptance of authority entails adhering to hierarchical structures, even if there are deviations in the decisions and actions (Morris & Leung, 2000).

In Addition, the altruistic tendency in Confucian thought is prominently expressed in the workplace as individuals are highly attentive to the impact of their behavior on their colleagues. They consider the needs of their colleagues and strive to accommodate these needs. They are willing to cooperate with colleagues, superiors, and the organization and demonstrate tolerance and forbearance even when colleagues, superiors, or the organization may behave unreasonably (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987).

Lastly, the principle of "face" in the workplace implies the need to be mindful of one's own, colleagues', and superiors' social reputations. Individuals continuously strive to uphold and enhance these reputations through various means. Apart from being an excellent "social self," individuals should privately communicate concerns regarding colleagues and superiors, attempt to maintain amicable relationships even when conflicts arise, and demonstrate an attitude of peaceful coexistence.

Employee Cooperation Behavior

Employee cooperation behavior refers to actions taken by employees in the workplace that go beyond their job requirements and contribute positively to the organization's

effectiveness. Organ (1988) describes a framework that categorizes employee cooperation behavior into four dimensions: helping others, team spirit, individual proactivity, mutual support, and humility. Employee cooperation behavior is influenced by a multitude of intertwined factors, encompassing interpersonal relationships within teams and individual psychological characteristics. Drawing from existing research findings, employee cooperation behavior is mainly influenced by three categories of factors: personal factors, interpersonal factors, and organizational and environmental factors.

Personal factors encompass an individual's values and personality traits, among other characteristics, and impact cooperation behavior. Han, Zhou, Li, and Cai (2012) indicate that individuals who highly advocate reciprocity and altruism are likelier to engage in cooperation behavior, underscoring the positive influence of an individual's moral orientation on their willingness to cooperate. Dou, Liu, Wang & Nie (2018) reveal that individuals with a heightened perception of social benevolence are more likely to perceive positive emotions, which makes them more willing to take cooperative actions.

Interpersonal factors include status conflicts among team members and leadership behavior, which can also influence cooperation behavior. Cai, Ma, Sun, and Cai (2018) demonstrate that status conflicts reduce the likelihood of cooperation among team members, emphasizing the significance of team-member relationships. Furthermore, Li and Xiao (2018) suggest that in organizational conflict situations, authentic leadership positively influences employee cooperation behavior, highlighting the crucial role of leadership behavior in shaping team cooperation.

Organizational and environmental factors include team size, cultural background, leadership systems, and more, collectively affecting cooperation behavior. Xu, Chen & Wang (2015) suggests that the size of a team and the duration of its existence influence the strength of cooperation among team members. Shao and Li (2014) indicate that industries with a high degree of cooperation demand a highly skilled workforce, emphasizing the impact of industry context on cooperation behavior. Moreover, Song, Ding, Shi, and Chen (2018) show that cultural backgrounds indirectly influence cooperation behavior by directly shaping cooperation behavior or influencing individual cognitive factors. According to Ma, Cheng, and Xue (2018), well-structured leadership systems, effective communication, and incentive mechanisms positively impact team cooperation quality. Additionally, Zheng, Cai, Li, and Shao (2017) demonstrate that decision frameworks influence an individual's willingness to cooperate, and psychological distance affects the level of cooperation within groups.

Cultural Values and Employee Cooperation Behavior

Pioneering studies by some scholars have indicated that cultural values significantly impact Chinese employees' behavior. For example, Farh, Early, and Lin (1997) confirmed the moderating effect of "obeying authority," a traditional value, on the relationship between perceived organizational fairness and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among Chinese employees. Farh and Hackett (2007) validated the moderating role of traditionality in the relationship between perceived organizational support and OCB in a sample of 163 superiors and subordinates in Beijing-Tianjin organizations. Research by Guo (2006) with 188 Chinese corporate employees suggested that individualism-collectivism predicted OCB towards supervisors and colleagues independently of perceived fairness. More recently, Lin & Ho (2010) found significant relationships between Hofstede's five cultural value dimensions and Chinese employees' organizational citizenship behavior while demonstrating a positive predictive role of "face" in OCB.

In addition, drawing from McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory (1961), individual achievement motivation can be divided into social-oriented and personal-oriented motivations. Under the influence of Confucian traditional values, Chinese employees often lean towards a social-oriented achievement motivation rather than a personal-oriented one (Yang & Zheng, 1987). This implies that employees are more concerned with the interests of others and their social reputation, placing the common good above personal gain. Guided by these values, employees may exhibit more cooperative behavior to maintain team harmony and overall benefits.

METHOD

This study adopted quantitative research. The population of this study was 15,240 front-line employees of modern Chinese aviation enterprises, and 400 sample size was determined at a 95% confidence level with a sampling error within 5% from Yamane's formula (1967). The data collection was conducted online using Questionnaire Star (<https://www.wjx.cn>). The questionnaire's link was distributed to front-line employees of modern Chinese aviation enterprises using a convenience random sampling method, and data collection was completed within 6 weeks.

The questionnaire was customized based on the research framework (see Figure 1), and the questions included both checklist and 5-point Likert scale question types. The measurement of Traditional Confucian Values (TCV) is based on the study conducted by Wang & Zhang (2012). The scale comprises four dimensions: obedience to authority, acceptance of authority, tolerance, altruism, and the principle of "face," totaling 15 items. Employee Cooperation Behavior (ECB) is adapted from the design by Du (2018) to assess employees' cooperative behavior in the workplace consisting of five questions. The questionnaire's reliability test was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Objective Congruence Index (IOC) measured the questionnaire's content validity.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data, including Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and inferential statistics, including Independent Samples t-test, One-way ANOVA, LSD, and Multiple Linear Regression.

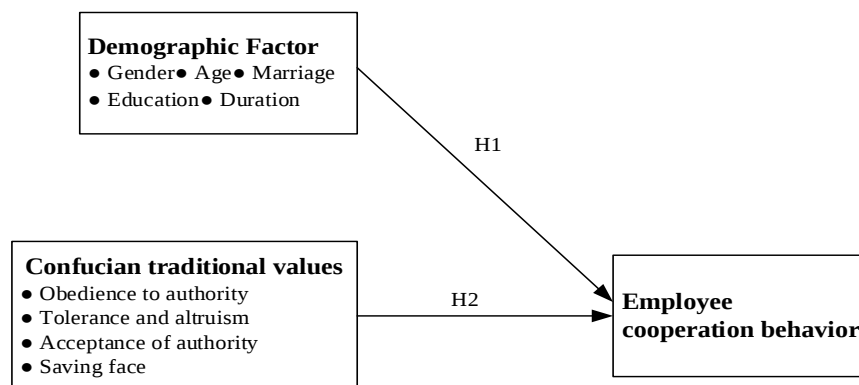


Figure 1. Research framework

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Most respondents are males, at 50.7%, and aged between 31 and 35 years old, at 34%. 60.3% are married, and 42.80% graduated from college or the undergraduate level. Working duration is 1 to 3 years, or 28%.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of Confucian traditional values and employees' cooperation behavior. The results show that customers' perceptions of the overview Confucian traditional values and employees' cooperation behavior are ranking moderately, with a mean value of 3.42 and 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.784 and 1.001. Among the Confucian traditional values, *tolerance*, and *altruism* is the highest ranking.

For employees' cooperation behavior, the results show that the overview of employees' cooperation behavior ranks moderately, with a mean value of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 1.001.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses. Table 2 summarizes the testing results for hypothesis 1. The analysis shows that the difference in customers' gender, age, educational level, marital status, and occupation affects employees' cooperation behavior differently.

Table 3 demonstrates the testing results for hypothesis 2. The result shows that the fitting index of model 3 is the best: $R = .510$. The ability to predict the analytical equation is 25.40% at the statistically significant level 0.05. Dubin-Watson value = 1.851, in the range of 1.5-2.5, indicates no problems with autocorrelation in residuals for multiple regression.

Table 4 demonstrates the multiple linear regression coefficients for the influence of Confucian traditional values on employees' cooperation behavior. The testing results indicate that employees' cooperation behavior positively relates to Confucian traditional values in *Obedience to authority*, *Tolerance and altruism*, and *Saving face* with the significant values of .000, .000, and .000 accordingly. However, the impact of acceptance of authority on employees' cooperation behavior was not supported—the forecasting equations for analysis results are provided in Table 5.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of Confucian traditional values and employees' cooperation behavior

Level of Opinion									
Confucian traditional values	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Meaning	Rank
Obedience to authority	4	84	158	97	57	3.30	0.988	Moderate	2
Tolerance and altruism	2	76	119	133	70	3.48	1.006	Moderate	1
Acceptance of authority	17	100	120	111	52	3.20	1.086	Moderate	4
Saving face	10	88	136	103	63	3.30	1.058	Moderate	3
Overview Confucian traditional values	-	32	210	116	42	3.42	.784	Moderate	
Employees cooperation behavior	2	91	126	124	57	3.36	1.001	Moderate	

Table 2. Summary of demographic data affects employees' cooperation behavior

Demographic	Employees Cooperation Behavior	Results
Gender	✓	$t(398) = -9.447, p = 0.000^*$
Age	✓	$F(4,395) = 23.986, p = 0.000^*$
Educational level	✓	$F(4,396) = 35.890, p = 0.000^*$
Marital status	✓	$F(2,397) = 28.367, p = 0.000^*$
Working duration	✓	$F(4,395) = 22.466, p = 0.000^*$

- no different effects at the statistical significance of 0.05

✓ have different effects at the statistical significance of 0.05

Table 3. Regression analysis to predict the influence of Confucian traditional values on employees' cooperation behavior

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Dubin-Watson
1	.409 ^a	0.167	0.165	0.915	
2	.480 ^b	0.230	0.226	0.881	
3	.510 ^c	0.260	0.254	0.865	1.851

^a Predictors: (Constant), Obedience to authority

^b Predictors: (Constant), Obedience to authority, Saving face

^c Predictors: (Constant), Obedience to authority, Saving face, Tolerance and altruism

Table 4. The multiple linear regression coefficients for the influence of Confucian traditional values on employees' cooperation behavior

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.152	0.193		5.982	.000		
Obedience to authority	0.251	0.050	0.248	5.018	.000	0.768	1.302
Tolerance and altruism	0.210	0.045	0.222	4.704	.000	0.839	1.192
Saving face	0.197	0.049	0.198	3.991	.000	0.762	1.312

Dependent Variable: employees' cooperation behavior

Table 5. Summary of Confucian traditional values influence employees' cooperation behavior

Hypothesis	Result	Forecasting Equations
		$\hat{Y}_T = 1.152 + 0.251X_1 + 0.210X_2 + 0.197X_4$
		$X_1 = \text{Obedience to authority}$
		$X_2 = \text{Tolerance and altruism}$
		$X_3 = \text{Acceptance of authority}$
		$X_4 = \text{Saving face}$

✓ have significant influence at the statistical significance of 0.05.

In the context of employee cooperation behavior, defined by actions surpassing job requirements and enhancing organizational effectiveness, the significance of cultural values becomes evident. While existing research has explored the relationship between cultural values and cooperation behavior, the focus has primarily been on cross-cultural validations of Western theories. This leaves a gap in understanding how Confucian cultural values uniquely impact Chinese employees, particularly in the aviation industry.

The study aligns with previous research highlighting the crucial role of traditional values in shaping employee behavior. Farh, Early & Lin (1997), Farh & Hackett (2007), Guo (2006), and Lin & Ho (2010) have emphasized the influence of traditional values like "obeying authority" and "face" on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among Chinese employees.

In aviation enterprises, where hierarchical structures and teamwork are paramount, employees exhibiting traits associated with Confucian values are likely to engage in more cooperative behaviors. The importance of "obeying authority" is underscored by the expectation that employees not only excel in their roles but also contribute beyond task requirements to advance team and organizational goals.

As a more profound manifestation of obeying authority, acceptance of authority further enhances the likelihood of employees demonstrating prominent cooperation behaviors. Those accepting authority tend to cater to leaders' expectations, aligning with the organizational ethos of encouraging citizenship behaviors that benefit the collective.

Moreover, the dimensions of "Tolerance and altruism" and "Saving face" play crucial roles. Employees displaying tolerance and altruism are more likely to cooperate with colleagues, leaders, and the organization to meet expectations, extending their efforts beyond job requirements. Similarly, individuals concerned with "face" actively shape positive social images, going beyond their job scopes to help others and exhibiting heightened cooperation behaviors.

The findings contribute to bridging the gap in the literature by exploring how Confucian traditional values specifically precondition employees in the aviation industry regarding cooperation behavior. The study's theoretical foundation, based on Wang and Zhang's (2012) research, and its empirical approach provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between cultural values and employee behavior.

In conclusion, the study underscores the significance of Confucian traditional values in fostering cooperative behavior among employees in Chinese aviation enterprises. These

findings offer practical implications for organizational management in leveraging cultural values to enhance teamwork, ultimately contributing to organizational success.

CONCLUSION

Most respondents are males between 31 and 35 years old, married, and graduated from college or the undergraduate level. The working duration is 1 to 3 years. The research findings suggest that the differences in gender, age, marital status, educational background, and working duration significantly affect employee cooperative behavior differently. Notably, female employees exhibited stronger cooperative behavior compared to their male counterparts. Marital status played a role, with married employees displaying higher cooperative behavior than unmarried or divorced employees. Length of employment was also a contributing factor, as employees with shorter and longer tenures showed stronger cooperative behavior.

The study reveals that Confucian traditional values significantly influence employees' cooperative behavior in Chinese aviation enterprises. Among the four dimensions of Confucian values, "Tolerance and altruism," "Obedience to authority," and "Saving face" were found to have a positive impact on cooperative behavior.

The following recommendations can be made based on the research findings to enhance employee management in aviation enterprises.

Incorporate Confucian values into corporate culture.

To integrate Confucian values into the corporate culture, leadership should plan from the top, incorporating these values into the company's mission, vision, and core values. Confucian values emphasize respect for authority, tolerance, altruism, obedience, and the importance of maintaining social harmony, which should become the cornerstone of the corporate culture. Leaders should embody these values in their words and actions, serving as role models for employees to learn Confucian values.

Establish Confucian values training and development programs.

Companies should develop comprehensive training and programs to ensure that employees understand and practice traditional Confucian values. These programs may include case studies and role-playing based on Confucian culture, helping employees better understand the practical application of these values in the workplace. Training content and formats should align with employees' work situations, employing diverse training methods such as online learning, face-to-face training, and workshops to accommodate different learning styles.

Incorporate Confucian values into leadership training.

Aviation enterprises should invest in leadership training to cultivate an understanding and practice of Confucian traditional values among the leadership. The behavior demonstrated by leaders is crucial in shaping corporate culture. Therefore, existing leadership training programs should include content related to Confucian values. Leaders should share the importance of Confucian values for successful work through avenues like employee meetings and internal publications, encouraging employees to embody these values in practice.

Establish recognition and reward mechanisms.

To motivate employees to demonstrate Confucian traditional values actively, aviation enterprises can establish recognition and reward mechanisms. Rewards can take various forms, such as bonuses, certificates, and promotion opportunities. To ensure fairness and transparency, evaluation criteria should be determined by colleagues and leaders. Such reward mechanisms can help employees clearly understand how to be rewarded through practicing traditional Confucian values, further promoting these values.

Developing differentiated management approaches based on demographic variables.

Firstly, given that research results indicate stronger cooperative behavior among female employees, organizations can provide gender-sensitive communication training. This helps strengthen communication skills among employees, enhancing team collaboration efficiency. Secondly, for employees with different ages and educational backgrounds, providing ongoing learning and training opportunities meets the needs of employees at various career stages. Thirdly, considering the trend of higher cooperative behavior among married employees, organizations may consider implementing policies that support marital stability. This may include flexible work arrangements, family support measures, and other benefits to facilitate a balance between work and family for employees. Lastly, for employees with shorter work tenures, offering more training and mentorship programs can help them adapt to the work environment more quickly. For those with longer work tenures, attention can be directed towards their career advancement paths and professional development.

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