

## A STUDY ON PROBLEM CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EMPLOYEES, IN JAPAN'S SERVICE INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT

Employees' problem consciousness is the critical management topic, in present human resource management and service industries. However, there are very few researches that had discussed about problem consciousness issue. The aim of this study was based on the Confucian Problem Consciousness model to expose the factors affecting the employee's problem consciousness from the point of view Chinese employees' problem consciousness in Japan' service industry. Based on the questionnaire survey, the findings were analyzed by multiple variable regressions, and discussed the factors affecting the employee's problem consciousness. Therefore, the analysis result revealed employees' problem consciousness in Japan' service industry

**KEYWORDS:** Service Industry, Employee, Problem Consciousness, Multiple Variable Regressions

### INTRODUCTION

Japan is experiencing the increasing dominance of the service industry. The rise of the service economy in industrialized countries is having considerable effects, on employment and economic activities in Japan. Employee attributes potentially, a vital factor for service industry efficiency. Hays and Hill (2006) demonstrated that, service organizations with highly motivated employees would enhance the level of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty. As the respondents were Chinese people with experience of working in Japan's service industry, they were familiar with the real-life processes of service provision in both Japan (as providers) and China (as customers). China's service industry is in the developing state. For the improvement of China's service industry, it is necessary to verify the employee's problem consciousness, from the perspective of Chinese employees in Japan's service industry. In the service industry, employees do not have a simple service as per the manual, but also have a contact with customers. When the employee provides the service, as human nature, such as emotion, passion, problem consciousness etc. is necessary. It can be said that, not only the concrete manual for the employment and training, which found the cause of creating service quality in the service industry. It is important to give employees an educational method that raises problem consciousness, to improve service quality.

In this research, the framework of this study is: (i) what is the relationship among service industry, employee, employee problem consciousness (ii) what is the problem consciousness. (iii) Why use the structure of the Confucian Problem Consciousness model (iv) the aim of this study, was based on the structure of the Confucian Problem Consciousness model, to expose the factors affecting the employee's problem consciousness, from the point of view employees' problem consciousness in Japan's service industry.

## THEOREICAL BACKGROUND

### Literature Review

In the service system, the customer's side and the provider's side are integrated, and influence each other. Many scholars emphasized the importance of customer-contact employees, in creating and providing good service quality (Bitner et al. 1990; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Kelley & Hoffman, 1997). Heskett et al. (1994), presented a Service-Profit Chain theory that had emphasized the critical role of an employee's performance, in pursuing customer satisfaction. Yoo and Park (2007) found that, employees in the service industry (service providers), as an integral part of the service process, plays a critical role in enhancing perceived service quality. The good performances of employee deeply depend on, their service attitudes and service behaviours. Tanner (2001) indicated, not only employee's service behaviours are affected by their attitudes, but also employee's service attitudes are affected by their consciousness. Moreover, he also addressed that, an employee with high positive consciousness is likely to be willing to participate in quality improvement efforts and to take on more responsibility, for service quality. In order to provide a high quality service, it is essential to systematize that, the parties have a strong problem consciousness. Employees 'problem consciousness, definitely is the critical management topic in present human resource management and service industries. However, there are very few researches that had discussed about problem consciousness issue. China's service industry is in the developing state.

### Problem Consciousness

Problem consciousness is a subjective conception of the problem (things and situation) (S. Ōeda, 1977). It is determined by the values, educational level, experience and knowledge of the parties (M. Yamamoto & M. Tagawa, 2010). In general, a large difference comes into play, depending on the level of problem consciousness in systematization. In particular, the service provided by a party with a different problem consciousness, is different from a service system, where a person supports others (K. Kodaira, 2010). In order to provide a high quality service, it is essential to systematize that, the parties have a strong problem consciousness (T. Tamaru, 2008). Problem consciousness is a subjective concept, a perception of things in everyday life. Problem consciousness arises from everyday life and emerges from the process of solving the problems of human society. In this meaning, it may be said that, problem consciousness is the way of life of people (S. Ōeda, 1977).

### The Chinese Philosopher Confucius

The Chinese philosopher Confucius explored people's ways of life, through ethics and human relations to find solutions to the problems afflicting human society (Li, Z. H., 2004; Roger, T. A, & Henry, R. Jr., 1998), for 2,500 years, Confucian's thought has influenced people's values and the management of social systems – from companies to whole nations – in Asia, especially in China, Japan, and Korea (Burton Watson, 2007; Huang Chichung, 1997). Although, social environments, ways of life, viewpoints, and human relations have changed substantially, since the Confucius's time (Legge, J., 1971), his views remain beneficial today, in terms of enhancing cooperation and consciousness, which is predicated on relationships between human beings (Wenzhen Shi, 2015).

### The Confucian Problem Consciousness Model

Wenzhen Shi. (2013), proposed The Confucian Problem Consciousness Model, which was based on the Confucian thought relating to a strong and active problem consciousness, collected in the Analects of Confucius using the

KJ method. The Confucian Problem Consciousness Structure may be a significant suggestion. It can be said that, the problem consciousness structure, which Confucius proposed showed a clear and effective direction, to provide a high quality service and is an important step in early training, to investigate and improve awareness of the issue of the parties, involved in a service system, where people support others.

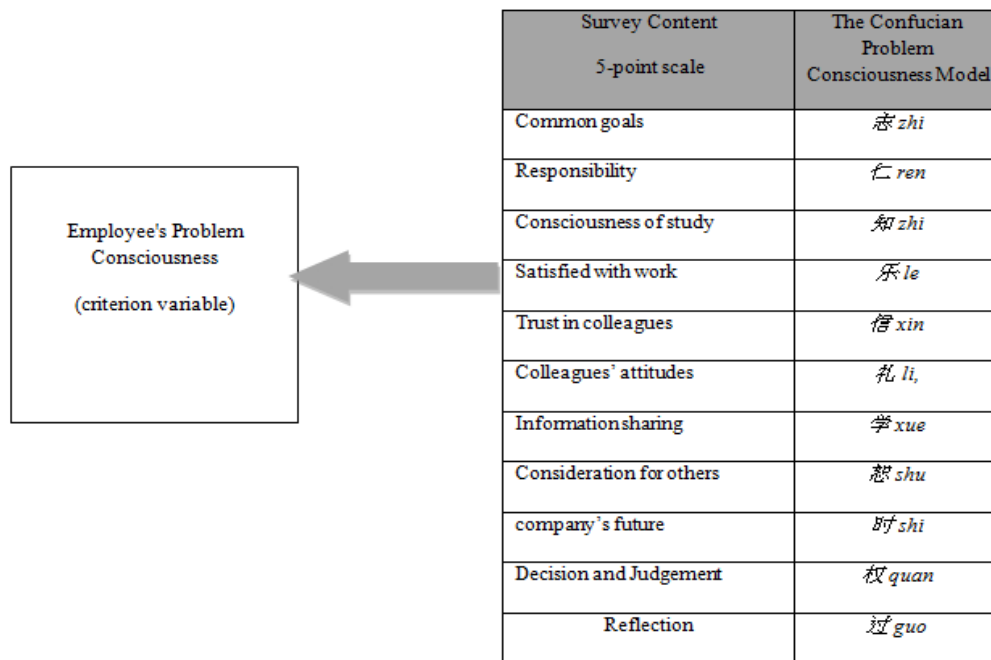
**METHODS**

**Questionnaire and Data Collection**

The authors investigated the Chinese, who have worked in Japan's service industry, with experience of working in Japan's service industry. The questionnaire comprised of 56 items and covered income, educational background, duration of stay in Japan and work experience in the service industry. The data were collected, during the period from June 1st of 2016 to January 21st of 2017. The questionnaires were distributed to China's largest SNS, based on net and We Chat. The number of questionnaires returned was 181. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, the survey data were not used for any other purposes. Analysis was conducted using SPSS 19.0, for Windows.

**Survey Details and Model Content**

The Confucian Problem Consciousness Model, consists of 11 items: 志 Zhi (aspiration), the objective of problem consciousness; 仁 ren, responsibility; 知 Zhi, wisdom (information and knowledge); 乐 le, enjoyment; 信 Xian, trust; 礼 Li, respect/manners; 学 Xue, information and knowledge sharing; 恕 Shu, compassion; 时 she, time; 权 quan judgement and 过 Guo reflection (Fig. 1). The survey questioned the respondents, on the following aspects of their real-life experience of working with colleagues: Common goals, Responsibility, Consciousness of study, satisfied with the work, Trust in colleagues, Colleagues' attitudes, Information sharing, Consideration for others, Think about the company's future, Judgement, Reflection



**Figure 1: The Confucian Problem Consciousness Model**

The content of the model (question item) consists of 12 questions (The responses to the survey were given on a 5-point scale).

- Whether the service quality and corporate image are related to the employee's work?
- Whether the employee has the goal of work.
- Whether the employee is responsible for his work.
- Whether the employee would like to study expertise at work. Target work.
- Whether the employee is satisfied/ enjoyed with the current work.
- Whether the employee trusts his colleagues or boss with work.
- Whether the employee care about the way of speaking or attitude.
- Whether the employee shared the information with colleagues.
- Whether the employee thinks about himself from the standpoint of a boss or colleague.
- Whether the employee thinks of the company's future.
- Whether the employee decides to deal with emergency situations.
- Whether the employee reflects himself at work when there is a mistake.

## RESULTS

### Basic-Attributes Result

The basic attributes of the survey respondents are shown in Table 1. The sample was composed of 76 males (42%) and 105 females (58%). Therefore, females accounted for almost 60% of the Chinese respondents, working in Japan's service industry. Only six persons were younger than 20 years; 20-35 year olds made up 83% of the sample. Respondents, who are older than 46years, accounted for 40% on the whole. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (90%) working in Japan's service industry were older than 25years of age. The item measuring duration of stay in Japan revealed that 45 of the respondents had been in Japan for 1-5 years (39%). Approximately, 42 of the respondents had been in Japan for 5-10 years (36%). Clearly, therefore, the majority of the Chinese people surveyed, had lived in Japan for more than 1 year. In terms of educational background, 60% of the respondents had attended either junior college or university, and 15 (13%) had received graduate education.

### Multiple Variable Regression Result

For the influential factors of the employee's problem consciousness, we performed a multiple regression analysis, with "Whether the service quality and corporate image are related to the employee's work?" was the objective variable, and the other 11 items were explanatory variables. In order to grasp the influential factors of problem consciousness, multiple regression analysis of the forced input method was conducted. Multiple variable regression analysis revealed that, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was 0.389 and the adjusted coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was 0.333, and 11 question items (explanatory variables) explain 33.3% of "Whether the service quality and corporate image are related to

the employee's work?" (Objective variable), this regression result was significant. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.063, and no problem was found, with the independence of residuals, for each independent variable (Hirai Akiyo, 2012).

**Table 1: Results of Multiple Variable Regression Analysis**

Item	Number	Percentage	
Age	0 ≤ age < 20	6	3.3%
	20 ≤ age < 25	52	28.7%
	26 ≤ age < 30	57	31.5%
	31 ≤ age < 35	40	22.1%
	Age ≥ 36	26	14.4%
Gender	Male	76	42%
	Female	105	58%
Length of stay in japan	Years < 1	27	14.9%
	1 ≤ years < 5	75	41.4%
	6 ≤ years < 10	58	32.0%
	11 ≤ years < 15	8	4.4%
	Years ≥ 15	13	7.2%
Educational background	Language School	14	7.7%
	Trade school	8	4.4%
	University	51	28.2%
	Master	89	49.2%
	PhD	19	10.5%

As shown in Table 2, The standardized partial regression coefficient (beta values) and the probabilities of significance, for the explanatory variables were "Consciousness of study" 0.160 (p < 0.05), "care about the way of talking and attitude with a colleague or boss" 0.266 (p < 0.001), "Information and experience sharing" 0.264 (p < 0.001), "decide to deal with emergency situations" 0.202 (p < 0.01) explained significantly the objective variable. Therefore, these variables were found to be significantly objective.

## DISCUSSIONS

The results of the multiple variable regression analysis indicated that, influential factors of the employee's problem consciousness in The Confucian Problem Consciousness Model are: Consciousness of study, care about the way of talking and attitude with a colleague or boss, Information and experience sharing, decide to deal with emergency situations. The factors are discussed in the following sections.

**Table 3: Results of Multiple Variable Regression Analysis**

N	Variable	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	Mean
1	Common goals	.018	.261	.795	.750	3.93
2	Responsible for work	.092	1.395	.165	.850	4.49
3	Consciousness of study	.160*	2.093	.038	.635	4.6
4	Satisfied with work	.001	.014	.989	.830	3.35
5	Trust in colleagues or boss	.065	.951	.343	.784	1.79
6	Careful about the way of talking and attitude with a colleague or boss	.266***	3.902	.000	.798	4.27
7	Information and experience sharing	.264***	3.955	.000	.834	4.21
8	Think about the position of your colleague or boss	.056	.773	.440	.708	4.12
9	Think about the company's future	.045	.633	.528	.727	2.22
10	Decide to deal with emergency situations	.202***	3.136	.002	.893	3.72
11	Reflect himself at work when there is a mistake	.062	.823	.412	.663	4.66

As, the beta value of consciousness of the study was 0.160, this factor had an influence on Problem Consciousness. It is speculated that, learning new knowledge may have become an important part of work in the setting under study. Nearly 87% of the Chinese employees had the educational background more than university, it can be said that, Chinese employees in Japan's service industry have strong learning awareness. For example, in the service industry, when the employee provides service, they will meet a variety of problems and customers, in order to make customers satisfied, the employee should have the awareness of learning. Knowledge, learning, acquiring training, and improving one's skills is critical to Problem Consciousness in the service industry, based on the Confucian Problem Consciousness Model.

The beta value for Care, about the way of talking and attitude with a colleague or boss was 0.266, indicating that, this factor made the contribution to the problem consciousness. In the service industry, the attitude is most important, especially for the Chinese employees in Japan's service industry, when they communicated with colleagues or bosses at the work, the reason for the different language and culture; it will lead to the employee caring about the way, the colleague or boss talks. Each of us, may approach life and work differently. While, it may be a challenge for some of us to work with people who don't think the way we do, everyone deserves to have his or her feelings and values respected. Rather than taking colleagues' assistance for granted, it is vital for Chinese employees in Japan's service industry, to understand the other side of every situation (the rules and culture of service industry in Japan), to improve yourself at work, think positive, acknowledge and listen to your colleague or boss and appreciate others, to ensure effective Problem Consciousness.

The beta value of Information and experience sharing was 0.264, indicating that, this factor made the contribution to problem consciousness. Therefore, the sharing and exchange of information and experience constitute a very important dimension of the Confucian Problem Consciousness Model. These activities are clearly very significant for Chinese employees in Japan's service industry, who have to share information about service users, work-related contacts, and their experiences at work with their colleagues. It is assumed that, the sharing and exchange of information and experience are indispensable conditions, for the practice of effective Consciousness.

The beta value for deciding to deal with emergency situations was 0.202. It is noted that, judging and evaluating the present conditions adequately and decide to deal with emergency situations in service industry, plays an important role based on the Confucian Problem Consciousness Model. Evaluation criteria and standards of judgment will become an important issue at the time of a decision. Supporting each other and taking responsibility for one's actions, provide a basis for mutual trust, which in turn enhances Problem Consciousness. In the service industry, when the employee provides service, when faced with an emergency, the employee should have a certain ability to judge and solve the problem, as much as possible to satisfy customer requirements and to solve the problem.

In contrast, the responses of the Chinese employees in Japan's service industry indicated that, 7 items did not have a significant influence on Problem Consciousness: 1. Satisfied with work, 2. Responsible for work, 3. Trust in colleagues or boss, 4. Reflect yourself when there is a mistake at work, 5. Think about the company's future, 6. Think about the position of your colleague or boss, 7. Common goals. Of the surveyed respondents, they were most part-time employees, for whom meaningful independent action at work was impossible. They were required to follow the instructions of their bosses or full-time employees, which – unsurprisingly – led to a lack of awareness of the common goals and think about the company's future of the system. For the Chinese employees, the different environment between Japan and China, the

pressure and high level of consumption and length of stay in Japan and different culture, led to a lack of awareness of the Satisfied with work, responsible for work, trust in colleagues or boss and reflect when there is a mistake at work.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this research, it clarified the employees Problem Consciousness in the services industry, from the viewpoint of a Chinese employee, based on the Confucian Problem Consciousness model, help in service industry for understanding the present situation of the Chinese employees' problem consciousness, in Japan's industry. According to the analysis result, the results indicated that, four of the model's items – care about the way of talking and attitude with a colleague or boss, Consciousness of study, Information and experience sharing, decide to deal with emergency situations, affected the problem consciousness.

Since, the research scope of this research was limited in a questionnaire survey of Chinese employees in Japan's service industry, for the future study, similar study investigates the Japanese employees in the service industry. Furthermore, make the comparative study between the Japanese employees' problem consciousness and the Chinese employees' problem consciousness, in Japan' service industry. The researchers may make a proposal for the comparative study of the development of china's service industry.

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