

Title	Effects of affective events and goal orientation on the helping behavior of service workers toward colleagues
Sub Title	
Author	山尾, 佐智子(Yamao, Sachiko) 林, 洋一郎(Hayashi, Yoichiro)
Publisher	慶應義塾経営管理学会
Publication year	2025
Jtitle	慶應経営論集 (Keio business forum). Vol.41, No.1 (2025. 3) ,p.1- 22
JaLC DOI	10.14991/006.20250331-0001
Abstract	Drawing on affective events and goal orientation theories, this study investigates the factors that influence the decision of Japanese service workers to help coworkers directly attending to foreign customers. A policy-capturing study on 273 individuals with 2,184 observations revealed that task difficulty discourages service workers from helping coworkers in attending to foreign customers. Service workers become increasingly hesitant in assisting coworkers if the local language proficiency of customers is high and when the learning goal orientation ( LGO ) of workers is low. However, service workers become less hesitant to assist coworkers if the task is difficult and when LGO is high.
Notes	研究論文
Genre	Journal Article
URL	<a href="https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00069671-20250331-0001">https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00069671-20250331-0001</a>

慶應義塾大学学術情報リポジトリ(KOARA)に掲載されているコンテンツの著作権は、それぞれの著作者、学会または出版社/発行者に帰属し、その権利は著作権法によって保護されています。引用にあたっては、著作権法を遵守してご利用ください。

The copyrights of content available on the KeiO Associated Repository of Academic resources (KOARA) belong to the respective authors, academic societies, or publishers/issuers, and these rights are protected by the Japanese Copyright Act. When quoting the content, please follow the Japanese copyright act.

# Effects of Affective Events and Goal Orientation on the Helping Behavior of Service Workers toward Colleagues

Sachiko Yamao  
Yoichiro Hayashi

## Abstract

Drawing on affective events and goal orientation theories, this study investigates the factors that influence the decision of Japanese service workers to help coworkers directly attending to foreign customers. A policy-capturing study on 273 individuals with 2,184 observations revealed that task difficulty discourages service workers from helping coworkers in attending to foreign customers. Service workers become increasingly hesitant in assisting coworkers if the local language proficiency of customers is high and when the learning goal orientation (LGO) of workers is low. However, service workers become less hesitant to assist coworkers if the task is difficult and when LGO is high.

**Keywords:** helping behavior, affective event, goal orientation, evaluation apprehension

## INTRODUCTION

To date, cross-cultural management and language-sensitive studies in international management demonstrated various challenges imposed on employees in conducting their tasks in cross-cultural and multilingual settings (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Tenzer, Terjesen, & Harzing, 2017). However, the majority of these studies traditionally focused on cross-cultural transactions among individuals working in “well-defined and homogeneous entities” of multinational companies (MNCs) and governments (Søderberg & Holden, 2002, p.103). With the increase in international travelers, especially due to the rise of emerging economies, scholars proposed that the traditional focus on employees of MNCs limits research opportunity to extend the current understanding and knowledge of international management (Hagan & Thomas Wassink, 2020; Shirmohammadi, Beigi, & Stewart, 2019).

This study focuses on workers in the service sector and examines their interactions with nonlocal and non-native foreign customers. Cross-cultural business transactions occur in a wider arena and involve not only employees of MNCs and governments but also other types of workers who are self-employed or are on contracts. This case is typical in the service sector, including the consumer retailing, hospitality, and tourism industries. A substantial proportion of workers in this sector may lack extensive exposure to cross-cultural and international interactions in their upbringing and personal lives. However, they are virtually at the forefront of cross-cultural interactions at their workplaces.

This study investigates the helping behavior of Japanese service sector workers to better understand their work motivation in a cross-cultural setting. In particular, this study features a service worker’s helping behavior toward a Japanese coworker attending to a foreign customer. Based on affective events theory (AET), we examine the local language proficiency of foreign customers, the level of task difficulty, and the existence of another coworker as predictors of the helping behavior of the focal worker. We also introduce goal orientation as a boundary condition, which may enhance or deteriorate the relationship between the predictors and the outcome. We develop hypotheses backed by the literature on AET and helping behavior (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Spector & Fox, 2002) and that on goal orientation theory (Dweck, 1986). Lastly, the study applied a policy-capturing approach for data collection (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Aiman-Smith, Scullen, & Barr, 2002).

The contributions of this paper are twofold. First, this study is firmly based on goal orientation theory (Dweck, 1986) and theorizes and tests the boundary conditions of the decision of Japanese service workers to help Japanese colleagues in cross-cultural transactions. In other words, the current study adds to the understanding of the extent to which goal orientation (i.e., learning and performance orientations) enhances or hinders the helping behavior of service workers toward colleagues. Second, it contributes to the international management literature by investigating the behaviors of nontraditional workforce (Hagan & Thomas Wassink, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019). Specifically, its focus on workers in the Japanese service sector contributes to the literature by showcasing the influence of goal orientation on their behaviors in cross-cultural interaction. Once again, this aspect offers an opportunity to broaden the scope of international management research to generalize knowledge about the attitudes and behaviors of individuals to the service workers who were not the focus in previous research.

## THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

This section introduces the literature on affective events, helping behavior, and goal orientation in developing hypotheses. The current study addresses helping behavior as the outcome of the task-related attitudes and perceptions of a Japanese service worker. We set two task characteristics (i.e., difficulty in communication due to language barriers and the difficulty of the task itself) and the existence of another coworker (i.e., a third worker) as antecedents that influence the decision of the worker to help the coworker. Based on AET, we argue that the relationship between the three antecedents and the outcome (i.e., helping) is rooted in negative affect such as state anxiety. We also adopt goal orientation theory and address the learning and performance orientations of the focal worker as moderators that influence the strengths of the relationship between the three antecedents and helping behavior.

### **State Anxiety and Helping Behavior**

Research on organizational behavior recognizes that affects or emotions influence the work behavior of individuals (Brief & Weiss, 2002). AET provides a useful framework for examining affects or emotions in the workplace (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). AET posits that specific events at work generate specific emotions, which in turn translate to spontaneous, affectively driven behaviors such as performance and voluntary work behavior. According to AET,

the experience of a positive or negative work event (e.g., downsizing) can elicit affective reactions (e.g., anxiety), which contributes to the formation of work attitudes and behaviors (Mignonac & Herrbach, 2004; Paterson & Cary, 2002; Rupp & Spencer, 2006).

Workplace helping behavior is a voluntary and positive behavior that involves the provision of voluntary assistance to others and general help to coworkers to avoid work-related problems (K.-Y. Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). It is often considered an essential element in conceptual frameworks of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Though they come with various labels such as altruism (Organ, 1988), interpersonal helping (Graham, 1991), and OCB toward individuals (OCB-I) (Williams & Anderson, 1991), all relates to the concept of helping coworkers at the workplace.

Negative affect is known to cause a negative impact on the workplace voluntary behaviors of individuals (Spector & Fox, 2002). Consisting of feelings of tension, apprehension, and nervousness, state anxiety is a negative affect that suppresses voluntary behaviors at work (Spielberger, 1966). Based on AET, we argue that these characteristics trigger affective events for Japanese service workers, which may influence their helping behavior (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Mignonac & Herrbach, 2004). Communication difficulty due to language barriers and task difficulty are seen as affective events which trigger negative emotions, such as state anxiety, for Japanese workers. We also introduce a social factor as the third antecedent (i.e., the existence of another coworker) that triggers negative affective events that hinder the helping behavior of the focal worker. As demonstrated by the classic social psychology studies on bystander effects (Darley & Latane, 1970), the existence of others exerts a critical impact on the helping behavior of workers. In general, performing one's task in front of a bystander can be stressful due to evaluation apprehension (Cottrell, Wack, Sekerak, & Rittle, 1968). On the basis of the aforementioned logic, we investigate the effect of language barriers, task difficulty and the existence of another coworker as sources of negative affect that take negative effects on workplace helping behavior.

*Communication difficulty and helping behavior.* In keeping with AET, numerous language-sensitive studies in international and cross-cultural management pointed to the negative effects of language barriers on establishing interpersonal relationships and task effectiveness (for a comprehensive review, see Tenzer et al., 2017). Many reasons underlie this phenomenon. Typically, individuals find that failure in communication due to a proficiency gap in a common language is stressful and frustrating. This proficiency gap may result in the loss of face and status of individuals with low proficiency (Neeley, 2013) and even loss of interpersonal trust (Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing,

2014). Moreover, using non-native language creates a substantial cognitive load that slows down the cognitive process and consequent behavior of non-native speakers, which is well known in cognitive and educational psychology (Ito, Corley, & Pickering, 2018; Roussel, Joulia, Tricot, & Sweller, 2017). Indeed, applied linguistic research on second language learning documents that individuals may experience foreign language anxiety or anxiety in communicating in a foreign language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Research demonstrated that such anxiety reduces the level of effectiveness of communication.

Japanese service workers may feel anxious and hesitant to help colleagues in a situation in which the colleagues are attending to foreign customers with less proficiency in the Japanese language (i.e., the local language). Helping the colleague necessitates the focal worker to communicate in a non-Japanese language of the customer's choice, which is foreign to the focal worker. The Japanese language is remarkably different from other natural language groups (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023), which makes it increasingly worrisome for the Japanese to speak another language. The opportunity for the Japanese to communicate in a foreign language in daily life is limited, which is also due to the dominance of the Japanese language in all aspects of life such as education, work, and personal life. Therefore, interaction with non-Japanese individuals, especially in other languages, may serve as a negative affective event to Japanese workers, which in turn arouse negative emotions such as anxiety. Engaging in cross-cultural interactions, thus, is a very daunting task for Japanese service workers especially if the foreign customer's Japanese language proficiency is low. On the contrary, if the proficiency of foreign customers in the local language is high, then the focal worker does not need to feel language anxiety and is likely to become willing to help colleagues. Therefore, we pose the following hypothesis:

*H1. The level of the Japanese language proficiency of foreign customers is positively associated with the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers directly attending to customers.*

*Task difficulty.* As AET explains, cross-cultural interaction is viewed as an uncomfortable situation (i.e., event) that triggers negative affect, such as embarrassment, stress, and state anxiety, in individuals (Molinsky, 2007). Handling difficult tasks makes service workers feel troublesome, exhausted, and stressed as they may fear failure to perform well and may fail to accomplish their tasks. Japanese service workers may find it especially stressful to engage in cross-cultural interactions, especially when the required task is difficult, due to such negative emotions. Hence,

workers may find it daunting to voluntarily help colleagues who are tackling a difficult task when attending to foreign customers. Therefore, we present the following hypothesis:

*H2. The level of task difficulty is negatively associated with the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers who are directly attending to foreign customers.*

*Existence of a third person.* The third predictor is the existence of another coworker apart from the one directly attending to foreign customers. This factor causes added stress and anxiety on focal workers who will decide on whether or not to help colleagues attending to customers due to evaluation apprehension. This term refers to the notion that the presence of another person who may approve or disapprove of the actions of individuals facilitates or inhibits their performance (Cottrell et al., 1968). The existence of another coworker may be the source of pressure related to the evaluation apprehension of focal Japanese service workers because they may feel anxious toward other coworkers in terms of their evaluation of the way focal workers helps coworkers attending to foreign customers.

In cross-cultural interactions, people in East Asia are known to be more sensitive to evaluation apprehension compared with those in the west. For instance, Y.-H. Kim, Chiu, Peng, Cai, & Tov (2009) found that East Asians (i.e., Chinese) tend to present themselves more modestly compared with European Americans and are likely to present themselves positively only when the pressure of evaluation apprehension is low. Another experimental research on the Japanese indicates that eliminating bias in apprehension evaluation is of utmost importance when designing experiments in Japan (Kudo & Numazaki, 2003). Given that the current study is on Japanese service workers, the researchers need to consider the fact that Japanese individuals are sensitive to evaluation apprehension. Thus, focal workers may fear being ineffective in supporting coworkers when a risk of being negatively evaluated by coworkers exists. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H3. The existence of another coworker is negatively associated with the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers who are directly attending to foreign customers.*

### **Moderating Effect of Goal Orientation**

Goal orientation refers to the reasons that underlie the engagement of individuals in different achievement behaviors in a given circumstance and is a dispositional trait that is relatively stable over

time (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). It was initially developed as a single-dimension construct but was later proposed as a two-dimensional construct with learning goal orientation (LGO) and performance goal orientation (PGO; Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1996). The difference between the two types derives from the variation in the perspectives of individuals in understanding their abilities.

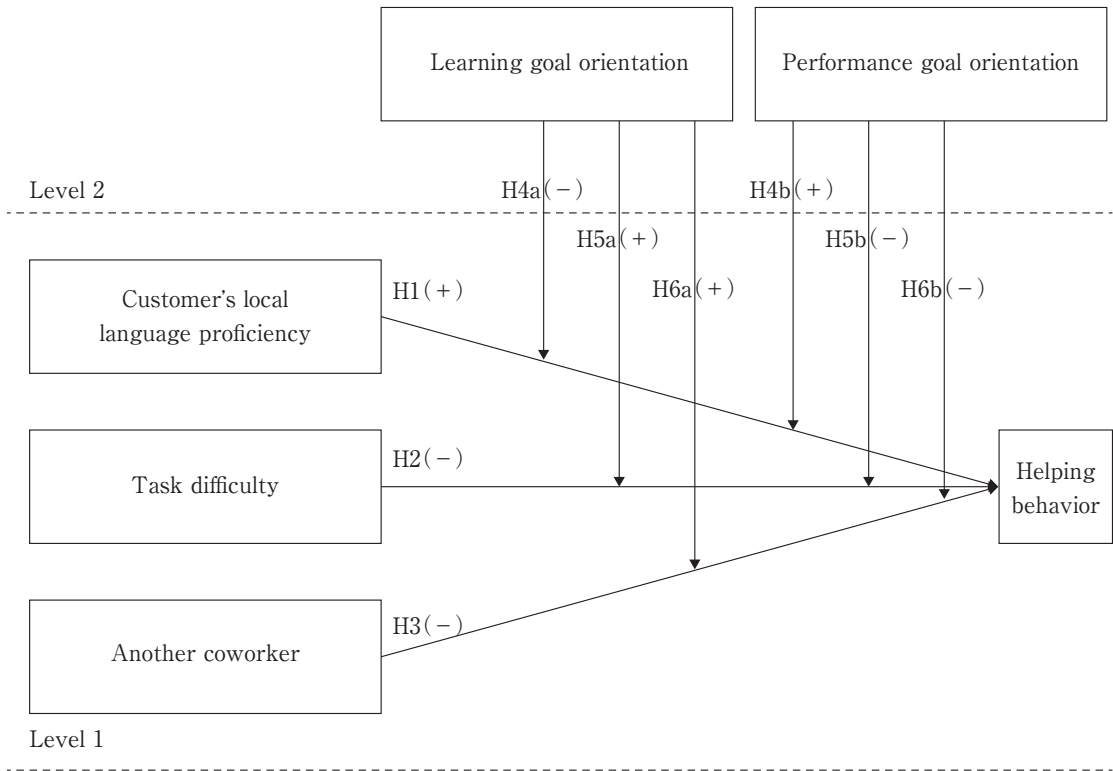
High-LGO individuals tend to hold an incremental perspective of their ability and view that it can be changed and further developed, while high-PGO ones tend to possess an entity perspective about their ability and view it as fixed and unchangeable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Consequently, individuals with high LGO prefer to increase their level of competence and gain new skills by learning in new situations (Button et al., 1996; Vandewalle, 1997). Meanwhile, individuals with high PGO prefer to exhibit competence to gain favorable judgment or avoid negative judgment (Button et al., 1996; Vandewalle, 1997).

LGO and PGO are not mutually exclusive, such that individuals tend to simultaneously exhibit LGO and PGO with varying degrees for each depending on each person (Button et al., 1996). The current study proposes that LGO and PGO influence the gravity of the process in which communication difficulty, task difficulty, and the existence of another coworker influence the level of helping behavior of focal Japanese service workers. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of the current study with the hypothesized relationships of all constructs.

*Role of goal orientations in the link between communication difficulty and helping behavior.* In developing hypothesis 4 (a), we focus on low LGO individuals and not on high LGO individuals because the latter would be inclined to gain knowledge and experience by engaging in the helping behavior regardless of the customer's Japanese language fluency level. This tendency would result in a neutral moderation effect on the negative association between local language proficiency of the customers and the focal worker's helping behavior.

We propose that the low LGO of the focal Japanese service workers strengthens the positive relationship between the local language proficiency of foreign customers and the behavior of workers to help colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. If the language proficiency of customers is high, then coworkers will not likely face much difficulty in communicating with customers. In this situation, focal workers with low LGO, who are less inclined to gain learning opportunities by facing challenging situations, will likely experience less anxiety in engaging in cross-cultural interaction. However, if the local language proficiency of customers is low, then the focal workers with low LGO will be less inclined to help coworkers attending to foreign customers to avoid being in a stressful situation. Therefore, we put forward the following hypothesis:

Figure 1. Hypothesized model



*H4 (a). The LGO of Japanese service workers negatively moderates the positive relationship between the level of the local language proficiency of customers and the helping behavior of workers to assist coworkers directly attending to customers; the lower the LGO, the stronger the positive relationship.*

We proffer that the high PGO of focal Japanese service workers strengthens the positive relationship between the local language proficiency of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. If the language proficiency of customers is high, then focal workers with high PGO, who are willing to demonstrate their competence and gain favorable judgment about it, tend to engage in cross-cultural interaction by helping colleagues. The high level of the local language proficiency of customers renders the cross-cultural interaction easier to navigate, such that it motivates Japanese service workers to showcase their performance. However, if the language proficiency of customers is low, then focal workers with

high PGO will hesitate to help coworkers in attending to such customers, because focal workers may not easily showcase their competence. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 4 (b). The PGO of Japanese service workers positively moderates the positive relationship between the level of local language proficiency of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward coworkers directly attending to customers; the higher the PGO, the stronger the positive relationship.*

*Role of goal orientation in the link between task difficulty and helping behavior.* We then propose that the high LGO of focal Japanese service workers weakens the negative relationship between the task difficulty of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. If the level of task difficulty is high, then workers with high LGO will be inclined to join the cross-cultural interaction with customers by helping coworkers. The reason is that high levels of task difficulty create learning opportunities for workers with high LGO. However, if the level of task difficulty is low, then focal workers with high LGO will be less inclined to help coworkers because they may view the situation as less challenging for gaining new learning. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H5 (a). The LGO of Japanese service workers positively moderates the negative relationship between the level of task difficulty and the helping behavior of workers toward coworkers directly attending to foreign customers; the higher the LGO, the weaker the negative relationship.*

We proffer that the high PGO of focal Japanese service workers strengthens the negative relationship between the task difficulty of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. If the level of task difficulty is high, then workers with high PGO will hesitate to join the cross-cultural interaction with customers by helping coworkers. The reason is that high task difficulty offers a situation in which workers with high PGO may be unable to demonstrate their capabilities. Individuals with high PGO tend to avoid such a situation, because they prefer to showcase their abilities to impress others. However, if the level of task difficulty is low, then focal workers with high PGO will be inclined to help coworkers because they may view the situation as suitable for demonstrating their competence to others. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*H5 (b). The PGO of Japanese service workers negatively moderates the negative relationship between the level of task difficulty and the behavior of service workers toward coworkers directly attending to foreign customers; the lower the PGO, the weaker the negative relationship.*

*Role of goal orientation in the link between the existence of another coworker and helping behavior.*

We propose that the low LGO of focal Japanese service workers strengthens the negative relationship between the existence of another coworker (i.e., the second colleague) in the service space and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The situation in which another coworker may be evaluating the behavior of focal workers can be very daunting for them. The situation is worse for individuals with low LGO who are less inclined to take on various challenges. On the contrary, focal workers with high LGO will be inclined to join cross-cultural interactions and help coworkers regardless as they prefer a challenging work setting to improve one's competence. Therefore, we present the following hypothesis:

*H6 (a). The LGO of Japanese service workers positively moderates the negative relationship between the existence of a second coworker and the helping behavior of focal workers toward the first coworker directly attending to foreign customers; the higher the LGO, the weaker the negative relationship.*

Lastly, we proffer that the high PGO of focal workers strengthens the negative relationship between the existence of another coworker (i.e., the second colleague) and the helping behavior of focal workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. Individuals with high PGO are likely to be more sensitive to situations in which an evaluator is present. In the current case, the evaluator pertains to the second colleague within the same service space. These individuals are more likely to be prone to evaluation apprehension and, hence, are inclined to withdraw from helping colleagues attending to customers. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*H6 (b). The PGO of Japanese service workers negatively moderates the negative relationship between the existence of a second coworker and the helping behavior of focal workers toward the first coworker directly attending to foreign customers; the higher the PGO, the weaker the negative relationship.*

## METHODS

We utilized a policy-capturing approach for data collection to test the proposed hypotheses. Policy-capturing is a simulation-based technique for investigating decision making in different situations, which are captured using hypothetical scenarios. Scholars deem this approach appropriate, because it is known as an effective method for examining causal relationships (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Aiman-Smith et al., 2002) and has been applied to the investigation of careers (Dahling & Thompson, 2010), leadership (Drescher & Garbers, 2016) and fairness judgments (Nicklin, Greenbaum, McNall, Folger, & Williams, 2011).

### **Data Collection Procedure and Participants**

The participants were recruited online through a research company based in Tokyo that has access to online panels across Japan. An advantage of this approach to data collection is that potential respondents suitable to the survey can be identified (T. W. H. Ng & Feldman, 2013). Previous research that involved data collection in Japan has taken a similar approach, because recruiting participants in Japan is difficult unless researchers have pre-existing contacts (Peltokorpi & Pudelko, 2021; Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). The study requested the research company to send links of online surveys to the panels. Two surveys were prepared with a one-week interval to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

The first survey contained several screening questions and questions based on scenarios. The screening questions were intended to eliminate unqualified individuals from the sample. The inclusion criteria are Japanese native speakers with experience in working in the service industry and have served non-Japanese customers in the past. To reflect the fact that this industry typically offers several types of employment, we invited individuals who are employed as full-time regular, full-time contract, and part-time workers. We also invited business owners to participate, because a substantial proportion of the service industry comprises small- and medium-sized businesses. Individuals who passed the screening process could move on to read eight scenarios and respond to the questions based on these scenarios. A total of 300 respondents completed the first survey.

After one week, we sent a link to the second survey to those who completed the first survey. The second survey contained questions related to individual traits and attitudes, including goal orientation. A total of 273 individuals (women: 36%, male: 64%) completed the second survey, which

resulted in a response rate of 91%. Approximately 60% of the respondents were employed full-time in the regular workforce, and 14% were full-time contract workers. Approximately 3% were part-time casual workers, and 24% of the respondents were business owners. Among the workers, 79%, 7%, and 14% worked in the following industries respectively: retail and wholesale; hospitality, catering, and restaurant businesses; and lifestyle- and leisure-related industries. Approximately 43% of the respondents completed a university degree.

### **Materials and Design**

We created scenarios about a hypothetical souvenir shop in which a coworker of a respondent and a non-Japanese customer are conversing about a good sold at the shop. The respondent is supposed to be standing next to the coworker and is in the position to assist the coworker. The scenarios comprise cues, which are experimentally manipulated independent variables. We set three cues according to the hypotheses: (1) whether the Japanese language proficiency of the customer is high or low; (2) whether the level of difficulty of the task required for attending to the customer is high or low; and (3) whether another coworker (i.e., a second colleague) is present who can observe the respondent, coworker, and customer. For the second cue, we outlined two goods that represent the level of task difficulty; the level is high (low) when the customer is asking about the ingredient (price) of the good.

The three cues and two levels resulted in eight scenarios (i.e.,  $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ ). We selected one of them to be replicated in the survey as the ninth scenario to check for the judgment consistency of the respondents, which will be discussed in the next section. We requested the participants to respond to all scenarios.

### **Measures**

*Dependent variable.* The dependent variable was helping behavior. To mitigate rating fatigue, the study measured this variable on a single item rated using a six-point scale ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 6 = “very much so.” While utilizing multi-item measures in academic research is typically encouraged, various scholars supported the validity and reliability of single-item measures (e.g., Allen, Iliescu, & Greiff, 2022). The wording of the item was “I help the coworker to whom the foreign customer is talking.” We adopted a six-point Likert-type scale vis-à-vis a five- or seven-point scale, because Asians, including the Japanese, have a high tendency toward a middle-response style (Harzing, 2006). Therefore, we deemed that excluding a middle point that outlines “neither A or B” is suitable. To check for judgment consistency, we performed a paired-sample *t*-test on the means of the

dependent variable rated in the two identical scenarios and did not find a statistically significant difference:  $t [272] = -1.12, p = 0.25$ . Moreover, the two means were highly correlated:  $r = 0.86, p < 0.001$ . These results indicated that the respondents exhibited a stable judgment in their ratings in the same scenarios.

*Moderators.* The moderator variables were the two dimensions of goal orientation (i.e., LGO and PGO). We adopted the measurement developed and validated by Button et al. (1996), which comprise eight items each for the two dimensions. The measures were translated from English to Japanese using a bilingual approach (Harpaz, 2003). Initially, two English–Japanese bilinguals translated the measures in parallel. The two versions of the translation were then compared with each other until the two translators reached a consensus. Afterward, a third bilingual person checked the revised translation to confirm if it sounded natural. Similar to the dependent variable, the moderators were also measured using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 6 = “very much so.” Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for LGO and PGO were 0.94 and 0.89, respectively. We also conducted confirmatory factor analysis of the two-factor measurement model using AMOS 27. The results indicated a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 [99] = 273.67, p < 0.01$ ; CFI = 0.94; SRMR = 0.06; RMSEA = 0.08). As these were the only two multi-item measures, we compared the two-factor model to a single-factor model in which all items loaded to a single factor ( $\chi^2 [100] = 844.42, p < 0.01$ ; CFI = 0.75; SRMR = 0.19; RMSEA = 0.17). The fit indices of the two-factor model were significantly better than the single-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2 [1] = 570.75, p < 0.01$ ), which supports the discriminant validity of the two measures.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables. To test the hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical linear modeling on the data using HLM8. Table 2 presents the modeling results.

### Level-One Analyses

H1 proposed that a positive association exists between the local language proficiency of foreign customers and the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers attending to customers. According to the results of Model 1, the relationship between the two variables is negative ( $\beta = -0.02$ ) and statistically nonsignificant ( $p = 0.59$ ). Therefore, the results do not support H1.

**Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Level 1					
1 Workers' helping behavior	3.90	1.25			
2 Customers' language proficiency	0.50	0.50	-0.01		
3 Task difficulty	0.50	0.50	-0.02	0.00	
4 Another coworker	0.50	0.50	-0.01	0.00	0.00
Level 2					
1 LGO	3.96	0.85			
2 PGO	3.69	0.78	0.30**		

Notes. Level 1  $N=2,184$  (observations). Level 2  $N=273$  (individuals). \*\* $p<0.01$  (two-tailed).

**Table 2. Hierarchical linear model for service workers' helping behavior**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	$\beta$	SE	$t$	$\beta$	SE	$t$
Level 1						
Intercept	3.95**	0.07	54.36	3.95**	0.07	58.07
Customers' language proficiency	-0.02	0.03	-0.82	-0.02	0.03	-0.55
Task difficulty	-0.05*	0.02	-2.31	-0.05*	0.02	-2.47
Another coworker	-0.03	0.02	-1.32	-0.03	0.02	-1.32
Level 2						
LGO						
LGO $\times$ language proficiency				-0.09*	0.04	-2.43
LGO $\times$ task difficulty				0.06 <sup>†</sup>	0.03	1.81
LGO $\times$ another coworker				-0.03	0.03	-0.91
PGO						
PGO $\times$ language proficiency				-0.02	0.04	-0.38
PGO $\times$ task difficulty				-0.03	0.02	-1.35
PGO $\times$ another coworker				0.03	0.03	0.90
$\chi^2$	197.06**			222.07**		

Note. Level 1  $N=2,184$  (observations). Level 2  $N=273$  (individuals). \*\* $p<0.01$  (two-tailed); \* $p<0.05$  (two-tailed); <sup>†</sup> $p<0.10$  (two-tailed).

H2 put forward that a negative association exists between task difficulty and the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers attending to customers. The results of Model 1 indicate that the relationship between the two variables is negative ( $\beta=-0.05$ ) and statistically significant ( $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, H2 was supported.

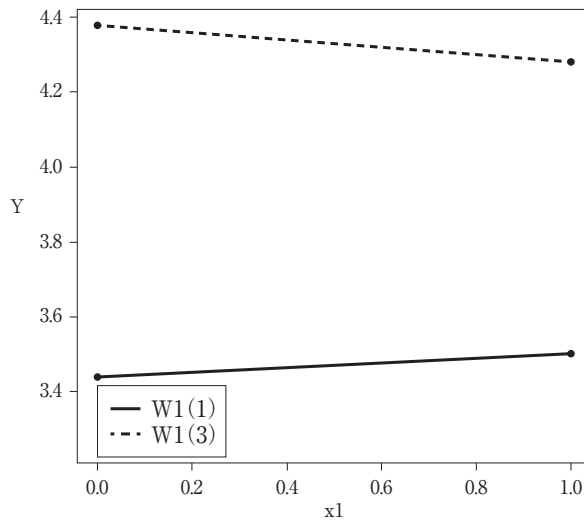
H3 posed that a negative association exists between the existence of another coworker and the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers attending to customers. The results

of Model 1 indicate that the relationship between the two variables is negative ( $\beta = -0.03$ ) but statistically nonsignificant ( $p = 0.20$ ). Therefore, H3 is unsupported.

### Level-Two Analyses

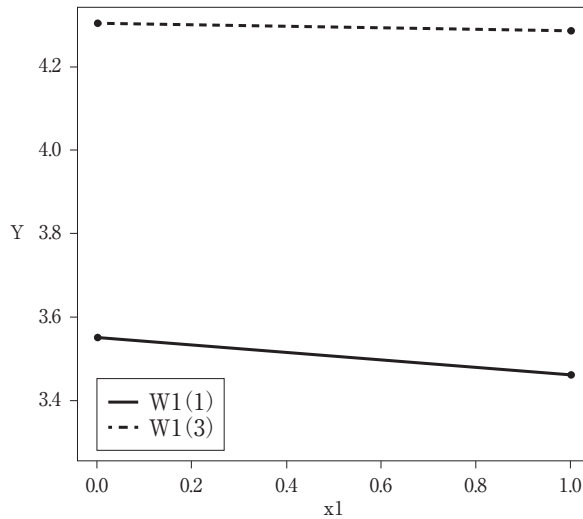
H4 (a) suggested that the low LGO of Japanese service workers strengthens the positive relationship between the local language proficiency of foreign customers and helping behavior of focal workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The results of Model 2 in Table 2 indicate that this case is true. The effect of the interaction term between LGO and language proficiency was negative and statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.09, p < 0.05$ ). We further analyzed the simple slopes of the interaction term between LGO and language proficiency. As Figure 2 depicts, the slope of the low LGO of service workers (i.e., W1 (1) = mean of LGO - SD) increases with the increase in the local language proficiency of customers, whereas that of service workers with high LGO (i.e., W1 (3) = mean of LGO + SD) decreases with the increase in the local language proficiency of customers. This result indicates the negative moderating effect of LGO. Therefore, we conclude that

**Figure 2. Two-way interaction plot for foreign customer's local language proficiency and service worker's LGO**



Notes. Y=helping behavior; X1=customer's local language proficiency; W1 (1) =mean of LGO-SD; W1 (3) = mean of LGO+SD.

**Figure 3. Two-way interaction plot for task difficulty and service worker's LGO**



Notes. Y=helping behavior; X1=task difficulty; W1 (1) = mean of LGO-SD; W1 (3)=mean of LGO+SD.

H4 (a) was supported.

H4 (b) proposed that the high PGO of Japanese service workers strengthens the positive relationship between the local language proficiency of foreign customers and the helping behavior of focal workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The results of Model 2 suggests that the effect of the interaction term between PGO and language proficiency was negative and statistically nonsignificant ( $\beta = -0.02, p = 0.70$ ). Therefore, H4 (b) was unsupported.

H5 (a) denotes that the high LGO of focal Japanese workers weakens the negative relationship between the task difficulty of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The results of Model 2 indicate that the effect of the interaction term between LGO and task difficulty was positive ( $\beta = 0.06$ ). Nevertheless, the statistical significance of this interaction term was marginal at  $p = 0.07$  ( $p < 0.10$ ). We further analyzed the simple slopes of the interaction term between LGO and task difficulty. Figure 3 depicts that the slope of service workers with low LGO (i.e., W1 (1) = mean of LGO-SD) decreases with the increase in task difficulty, while that of service workers with high LGO (i.e., W2 = mean of LGO+SD) remains nearly stable with the increase in task difficulty. This finding indicates the positive moderating effect of LGO. Therefore, we conclude that H5 (a) was marginally supported.

H5 (b) indicated that the high PGO of focal Japanese workers strengthens the negative relationship between the task difficulty of foreign customers and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The effect of the interaction term between PGO and task difficulty was negative and nonsignificant ( $\beta = -0.03, p = 0.18$ ). Therefore, H5 (b) was unsupported.

H6 (a) proposed that the low LGO of focal Japanese workers strengthens the negative relationship between the existence of another coworker (i.e., the second colleague) within the service space and the helping behavior of workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The effect of the interaction term between LGO and the existence of another coworker was negative but statistically nonsignificant ( $\beta = -0.03, p = 0.36$ ). Therefore, H6 (a) was unsupported.

Hypothesis 6 (b) suggested that the high PGO of focal Japanese workers strengthens the negative relationship between the existence of another coworker (i.e., the second colleague) and the helping behavior of focal workers toward colleagues directly attending to foreign customers. The effect of the interaction term between PGO and another coworker was positive but statistically nonsignificant ( $\beta = 0.03, p = 0.37$ ). Therefore, H6 (b) was unsupported.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study presented that task difficulty is negatively related to the helping behavior of Japanese service workers toward coworkers attending to foreign customers. Importantly, we found that service workers become more willing to assist coworkers if the local language proficiency of customers is high and when the LGO of focal workers is low. Moreover, service workers become less hesitant in assisting coworkers if a task is difficult and when the LGO of workers is high. The current study elucidated the importance of the goal orientations of Japanese service workers in understanding helping behavior in a cross-cultural business setting.

### **Implications to Theory and Research**

First, this study identified LGO as an important boundary condition for the decision of Japanese service workers to help Japanese colleagues in cross-cultural transactions. As previously explained, LGO highlights the view that competence can be changed and further developed. Individuals with high LGO are inclined to gain new skills through learning (Button et al., 1996; Vandewalle, 1997). The results demonstrated that LGO is a key mental device that can ease a challenging situation and

motivates individuals to engage in prosocial behavior. Previous studies on expatriate management identified the differential effects of various facets of goal orientation on the cross-cultural adjustment and assignment performance of expatriates (Gong & Fan, 2006; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007). The current study demonstrated that goal orientation in general and LGO in particular are relevant to a wide group of actors in international management, that is, not only to expatriates but also to service workers who do not necessarily relocate overseas.

Second, the current study offers insights for the international management literature by investigating the behavior of Japanese service sector workers, who were overlooked by previous studies in this field (Hagan & Thomas Wassink, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019). By addressing this research gap, the current study widened the scope of international management research to gain a nuanced understanding about the attitudes and behaviors of individuals who are at the forefront of cross-cultural interactions.

Third, the study also gives insights into the literature on goal orientation. In contrast to the two-dimensional framework adopted in the current study, Vandewalle (1997) proposed a three-dimensional framework composed of LGO and two additional dimensions of PGO with *prove* and *avoid*. Furthermore, Attenweiler & Moore (2006) suggest that there may be a four-dimension as PGO-*avoid* could be split into two dimensions. The authors also cited that LGO is the most established construct compared with PGO, which remains in the process of development. The current study validated this view, because the supported hypotheses (i.e., H2, H3, H4 (a) and H5 (a)) are associated with LGO. Although we preferred a parsimonious (two-dimensional) framework to reduce respondent fatigue, future studies could test alternative models to explore the role of goal orientation as a boundary condition of cross-cultural interaction.

### **Implications to Practice**

The current study also offers valuable implications to practice. It revealed that the LGO of service workers is an important asset for employers, because it contributes to the helping behavior toward colleagues within a team. Individuals with high LGO are likely to be less hesitant to tackle more challenging tasks, because these tasks provide them with opportunities to learn and grow. When selecting team members to attend to foreign visitors, employers and team leaders should consider the goal orientation of individuals and assign individuals with high LGO as members.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The current study has its limitations. First, it adopted a quasi-experimental design, which may have caused respondent fatigue, because the participants were required to read eight scenarios and rate multiple measures per scenario. In this regard, a number of respondents may have experienced difficulty in differentiating a scenario that tested the existence and nonexistence of a third coworker. Designing a survey using a conjoint analysis might be a way forward to lower the respondent fatigue. Conjoint analysis originates in marketing research and has been applied in management research to a small extent (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2019). Surveys designed in this approach requires to select some out of all hypothetical scenarios according to an orthogonal array (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2019). Multiple patterns of scenarios will be allocated to respondents to rate. In this way, each respondent will rate only a part of all scenarios. Conjoint analysis is still uncommon in organizational behavior and international management research and thus is an avenue for contribution.

Apart from design issues, we caution that the results may not be generalizable to a culturally dynamic society comprised of multicultural and multilingual populations. The reason is that the current study was designed on the basis of the unique context of the Japanese society, and data were collected from Japanese workers. Therefore, generalizability is debatable, because the majority of Japanese people believe that their society is monolingual and ethnically homogenous. Backed by such a strong belief, the Japanese people tend to experience state anxiety when interacting with non-Japanese individuals. That said, we also suggest that the current study could still be useful to a culturally dynamic society with multicultural and multilingual populations. This is because there are pockets of areas within a multicultural society where non-multicultural, or homogenous, population reside and work. In such areas, the findings of the current study could be applicable.

While we acknowledge these shortcomings, we also believe that the study took a step forward in research on the cross-cultural business interaction of service workers who are at the forefront of inbound tourism. Specifically, the current study contributed to the understanding on the potential effect of negative affective events that trigger stress, awkwardness, and anxiety on the helping behavior of service workers and that their goal orientations act as a boundary condition. Understanding the cognitive factors that facilitate or hinder the behavioral outcomes of service workers is vital for society in general to enable adaption to a globalized world. Thus, additional research is required in this field to reveal the helping behavior of service workers in cross-cultural settings.

## 謝辞

本研究は JSPS 科研費 JP19H01521 の助成を受けて実施された。

## References

- Adler, N. J., & Aycan, Z. (2018). Cross-cultural interaction: What we know and what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5 (1), 307-333.
- Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best practice recommendations for designing and implementing experimental vignette methodology studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, 17 (4), 351-371.
- Aiman-Smith, L., Scullen, S. E., & Barr, S. H. (2002). Conducting studies of decision making in organizational contexts: A tutorial for policy-capturing and other regression-based techniques. *Organizational Research Methods*, 5 (4), 388-414.
- Allen, M. S., Iliescu, D., & Greiff, S. (2022). Single item measures in psychological science. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 38 (1), 1-5.
- Ashkanasy, N. M., & Dorris, A. D. (2017). Emotions in the workplace. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4 (1), 67-90.
- Attenweiler, W. J., & Moore, D. (2006). Goal orientations: Two, three, or more factors? *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66 (2), 342-352.
- Brief, A. P., & Weiss, H. M. (2002). Organizational behavior: Affect in the workplace. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53 (1), 279-307.
- Button, S. B., Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1996). Goal orientation in organizational research: A conceptual and empirical foundation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 67 (1), 26-48.
- Cottrell, N. B., Wack, D. L., Sekerak, G. J., & Rittle, R. H. (1968). Social facilitation of dominant responses by the presence of an audience and the mere presence of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 9 (3), 245-250.
- Dahling, J. J., & Thompson, M. N. (2010). Contextual supports and barriers to academic choices: A policy-capturing analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77 (3), 374-382.
- Darley, J. M., & Latane, B. (1970). Norms and normative behavior: Field studies of social interdependence. In J. Macaulay & L. Berkowitz (Eds.), *Altruism and Helping Behavior* (pp. 83-102). New York: Academic Press.
- Drescher, G., & Garbers, Y. (2016). Shared leadership and commonality: A policy-capturing study. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27 (2), 200-217.
- Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychologist*, 41 (10), 1040-1048. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.41.10.1040
- Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95 (2), 256-273.
- Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (2023). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. Twenty-sixth edition. Retrieved from <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Gong, Y., & Fan, J. (2006). Longitudinal examination of the role of goal orientation in cross-cultural adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91 (1), 176-184.
- Graham, J. W. (1991). An essay on organizational citizenship behavior. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 4 (4), 249-270.
- Hagan, J. M., & Thomas Wassink, J. (2020). Return migration around the world: An integrated agenda for

- future research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46 (1), 533-552.
- Harpaz, I. (2003). The essence of performing meaningful comparative international survey research. In B. J. Punnett & O. Shenkar (Eds.), *Handbook for International Management Research* (2nd ed., pp. 17-48). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Harzing, A.-W. (2006). Response styles in cross-national survey research: A 26-country study. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 6 (2), 243-266.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125-132.
- Ito, A., Corley, M., & Pickering, M. J. (2018). A cognitive load delays predictive eye movements similarly during L1 and L2 comprehension. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 21 (2), 251-264.
- Kim, H.-R., & Oh, I. (2012). Foreigners cometh! Paths to multiculturalism in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 21 (1), 105-133.
- Kim, Y.-H., Chiu, C.-Y., Peng, S., Cai, H., & Tov, W. (2009). Explaining East-West differences in the likelihood of making favorable self-evaluations: The role of evaluation apprehension and directness of expression. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 41 (1), 62-75.
- Kudo, E., & Numazaki, M. (2003). Explicit and direct self-serving bias in Japan: Reexamination of self-serving bias for success and failure. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34 (5), 511-521.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Language anxiety: Its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages. *Language Learning*, 41 (4), 513-534.
- Mignonac, K., & Herrbach, O. (2004). Linking work events, affective states, and attitudes: An empirical study of managers' emotions. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 19 (2), 221-240.
- Molinsky, A. (2007). Cross-cultural code-switching: The psychological challenges of adapting behavior in foreign cultural interactions. *Academy of Management Review*, 32 (2), 622-640.
- Neeley, T. B. (2013). Language matters: Status loss and achieved status distinctions in global organizations. *Organization Science*, 24 (2), 476-497. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1120.0739
- Ng, K.-Y., & Van Dyne, L. (2005). Antecedents and performance consequences of helping behavior in work groups: A multilevel analysis. *Group & Organization Management*, 30 (5), 514-540.
- Ng, T. W. H., & Feldman, D. C. (2013). Age and innovation-related behavior: The joint moderating effects of supervisor undermining and proactive personality. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 34 (5), 583-606.
- Nicklin, J. M., Greenbaum, R., McNall, L. A., Folger, R., & Williams, K. J. (2011). The importance of contextual variables when judging fairness: An examination of counterfactual thoughts and fairness theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 114 (2), 127-141.
- Olneck, M. R. (2011). Facing multiculturalism's challenges in Korean education and society. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 12 (4), 675-690.
- Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Paterson, J. M., & Cary, J. (2002). Organizational justice, change anxiety, and acceptance of downsizing: Preliminary tests of an AET-based model. *Motivation and Emotion*, 26 (1), 83-103.
- Peltokorpi, V., & Pudelko, M. (2021). When more is not better: A curvilinear relationship between foreign language proficiency and social categorization. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52 (1), 78-104.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88 (5), 879-903.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: a critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*, 26 (3), 513-563.

- Roussel, S., Joulia, D., Tricot, A., & Sweller, J. (2017). Learning subject content through a foreign language should not ignore human cognitive architecture: A cognitive load theory approach. *Learning and Instruction, 52*, 69–79. doi: 10.1016/j.learninstruc.2017.04.007
- Rupp, D. E., & Spencer, S. (2006). When customers lash out: the effects of customer interactional injustice on emotional labor and the mediating role of discrete emotions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91* (4), 971–978.
- Shepherd, D. A., & Zacharakis, A. (2019). Conjoint analysis: A window of opportunity for entrepreneurship research. In J. A. Katz & A. C. Corbett (Eds.), *Reflections and Extensions on Key Papers of the First Twenty-Five Years of Advances* (pp. 175–212). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.
- Shirmohammadi, M., Beigi, M., & Stewart, J. (2019). Understanding skilled migrants' employment in the host country: A multidisciplinary review and a conceptual model. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 30* (1), 96–121.
- Söderberg, A.-M., & Holden, N. (2002). Rethinking cross cultural management in a globalizing business world. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 2* (1), 103–121.
- Spector, P. E., & Fox, S. (2002). An emotion-centered model of voluntary work behavior: Some parallels between counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. *Human Resource Management Review, 12* (2), 269–292.
- Spielberger, C. D. (1966). Theory and research on anxiety. In C. D. Spielberger (Ed.), *Anxiety and Behavior* (pp. 413–428). New York: Academic Press.
- Takeuchi, R., Lepak, D. P., Wang, H., & Takeuchi, K. (2007). An empirical examination of the mechanisms mediating between high-performance work systems and the performance of Japanese organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92* (4), 1069–1083.
- Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M., & Harzing, A.-W. (2014). The impact of language barriers on trust formation in multinational teams. *Journal of International Business Studies, 45* (5), 508–535.
- Tenzer, H., Terjesen, S., & Harzing, A.-W. (2017). Language in international business: A review and agenda for future research. *Management International Review, 57* (6), 815–854.
- Vandewalle, D. (1997). Development and validation of a work domain goal orientation instrument. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 57* (6), 995–1015.
- Wang, M., & Takeuchi, R. (2007). The role of goal orientation during expatriation: A cross-sectional and longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92* (5), 1437–1445.
- Weiss, H. M., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 18* (1), 1–74.
- 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.

Sachiko Yamao (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Business Administration, Keio University)  
Yoichiro Hayashi (Professor, Graduate School of Business Administration, Keio University)