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THE CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS  
OF ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYEES' JOB  
SATISFACTION: THE TURKISH SMALL  
AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs) CASE

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**ABSTRACT.** The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether cultural orientations which were pervasive and salient in the society of SMEs' entrepreneurs predict employees' job satisfaction. Paternalism, collectivism, individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance were assessed as pervasive and salient attributes for Turkish society. Data were gathered from 217 male SMEs entrepreneurs and 1140 employees. The cultural orientations scales together with some questions related to the firms and demographics, and job diagnostic index (JDI) with demographical questions were applied to entrepreneurs and employees, respectively. The findings of this study revealed that paternalism, collectivism and power distance predicted employee job satisfaction significantly. It was argued that the congruency between entrepreneurs' cultural orientations and employees' cultural background and expectations, which was shaped by the organizational socialization process, might lead these results.

**KEY WORDS:** cultural orientations, job satisfaction, person-organization fit, SME entrepreneurs

INTRODUCTION

Many aspects of the relationship between culture and economic development such as collective efficiency (Schmitz, 1995, 1999), ethnic and cultural entrepreneurship (Wai-Sum, 2001; Chaganti and Greene, 2002; Fang, 2003), regional developmental models (Becattini, 1990; Brusco, 1990; Rabelotti, 1995; Humphrey and Schmitz, 1996), and family and kinship-based networks in economy (Palloni et al., 2001; Ram et al., 2001; Mellahi and Wood, 2003) have frequently been studied in recent years by many researchers in several disciplines. Problems and difficulties experienced in Fordist-type production since

the 1970s have caused experts to question western-type job values and Taylorist management practices. Within the same period, the developmental dynamics movement that started and progressed in Japan and Southeast Asian countries has necessarily shifted the point of view from “rational job analysis” and “scientific management” based on the Taylorist approach to social and cultural sides of the workplace. This shift implied that one should take culture into account as an economical actor. The underlying effects of cultural norms and value systems such as individualism/collectivism, loyalty, job commitment, Confucian value system, family and kinship-based networks on management practices and innovative technologies were evaluated repeatedly.

This recent progress has immediately been reflected in the field of entrepreneurship. In other words, definitions and the content of entrepreneurship have evolved from personal characteristics to organizational and cultural aspects. Early conceptualizations of entrepreneurship merely consisted of several personality traits like innovativeness, risk taking, achievement orientation, proactive orientation, etc. (Schumpeter, 1934; McClelland, 1961; Miller, 1983). However, recent studies evidence a tendency of explaining entrepreneurship with social and cultural features of the entrepreneurial environment. Gartner (1985) and Zapalska and Fogel (1998), for example, indicated that there is enough evidence that the social and cultural characteristics of industrial districts are influencing the behavior of the entrepreneur. We, therefore, consider entrepreneurship to be a product of socio-economic and cultural structure of a given society or community.

The entrepreneur, being a founder, a transformer, a producer, and a reproducer of the organization with its norms and values, is a central and vital factor of small and medium-size enterprises (shortly, SMEs). An entrepreneur's ability to set up and realize the relationship networks both within and outside of his/her organization and the entrepreneur's capacity to integrate his/her organization with the local culture are the essential prerequisites for the organization to survive in competitive markets and to acquire an innovative edge in terms of both technology and structure.

It should be noted that national culture is one of the important supportive factors to entrepreneurship. Legal and civic institutions, cultural and business values pervading in the society determine the

overall level of entrepreneurship activity and, in turn, entrepreneurs contribute to the cultural and business values of the society through the social networks. Therefore, entrepreneurship should be evaluated as a kind of synthesis of interrelated individual, social, cultural, and economical factors instead of being viewed or assessed as an extraordinary individual ability based on certain personality traits.

Several studies that have been conducted on national and organizational culture come to the conclusion that culture is one of the main determining factors of social and economical behavior that shapes the society continuously. On this matter, Hofstede's (1980, 1991) cultural classification is the preferred conceptualization for handling global and national aspects of human behavior. Hofstede regarded culture as a five-dimensional construct whose dimensions are represented by individualism, collectivism, power-distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity. He then classified nations and regions using these dimensions. We will examine each of these dimensions in as much detail as possible within our limited scope.

However, before starting, we should reiterate that although there are a bulk of studies investigating the relationships between cultural values and management styles (Tayeb, 1995; Jackson, 2001; Shaheena, 2003), there are only a limited number of studies aimed at exploring the relationships between socio-cultural structure and entrepreneurship. The present study is important both for relating the SME entrepreneurship to social-cultural structure and for determining how this relationship affects SME employees' job satisfaction.

There are studies that relate the SME entrepreneurship to social-cultural structure in Turkish culture. In recent years, Esmer (1998), in a multi-country survey of moral values, concluded that Turkish society exhibited a mixed and not-altogether-consistent set of values: neither democratic nor totally autocratic, neither industrialized nor technologically backward, open to change but also conservative, and valuing achievement as much as security and relationships at work. On the other hand, Schwartz (1994), based on cross-cultural teacher and student samples on several nations, concluded that Turkish people are high on conservatism, hierarchy, and egalitarian commitment, but low on affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy and mastery. According to Hofstede's findings, Turkish culture, in an

overall sense, is high on collectivism and power-distance but low on uncertainty-avoidance and individualism. Adding to these features, Aycan and Kanungo (2000) found that, together with hierarchy and collectivism, paternalistic orientation is also pervasive for Turkish people. As a result, although the young and educated urban population scores quite high on individualism, competitiveness, and autonomy, qualities like collectivism, hierarchy, power-distance, and conservative attitudes are common, especially for people from rural and lower socio-economical level districts.

Relationships between employees and employers are heavily affected by these basic cultural orientations. Obviously management practices of Turkish entrepreneurs are deeply influenced by their cultural background. In fact, many studies done in East Asian countries have clearly shown that the management practices directly benefit from their national cultures (Tayeb, 1995; Begley and Tan, 2000; Peterson and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 2003). Considering Turkish cultural structure, we prefer Hofstede's conceptualizations and add paternalism to determine Turkish cultural variables.

As a dimension of socio-cultural environment, paternalism suggests a relationship between the agents in any economic organization in which the employers treat their employees in a manner similar to the way parents treat their children (Dore, 1958; Bennet and Iwao, 1963). So paternalism is explained by "fatherly" behavior toward employees. Bennet and Iwao (1963), in their analysis of paternalism from an international perspective, suggest two features of paternalism. One is a degree of hierarchy that is greater than the minimal amount of any employer-employee relationship should display in an organizational setting. The other is the concern shown by employers for their employees' livelihood, which has nothing to do with the actual work performed (Dore, 1958). Thus, for the worker, employment in a firm governed in a paternalistic manner constitutes a career and promotes a sense of loyalty and belonging. In return, the firm shows interest in the worker by being concerned for his/her health, education, personal well-being and family life. The paternalistic manager or entrepreneur establishes his/her authority by considering employees' family needs and guiding them according to their individual situation. The paternalistic management practice is fundamentally based on interdependence, respect and loyalty between management and workers.

In a paternalistic relationship, the role of the manager or the entrepreneur is to provide guidance, protection and care for the subordinates, and the role of the workers, in return, is to be loyal and deferential to the manager or the entrepreneur. Paternalism is one of the most noticeable characteristics of many Asian countries (Kim, 1994; Redding et al., 1994) such as China, Japan, Korea and India. Aycan et al. (2000), Aycan and Kanungo (2000) found that Turkish workers perceive their manager as a “father” or a protector and indicated that this perception, together with high power distance, could be advantageous for improving the relationships in the workplace and the job satisfaction of the individual worker. Nichols et al. (2002) investigating modern management practices such as quality circles and total quality management (TQM) in three industrial districts of Turkey producing household goods determined that the most satisfied workers among them were from Bolu district where the top management of big firms generally exhibited paternalistic tendencies. According to the study, these managers set up “coffee houses” and provided bus services to take workers to Friday prayer, which is one of the fundamental rituals of Islam.

The main cultural axis used for classifying societies since 1980 is the individualism/collectivism construct. According to Hofstede (1980), individualist societies emphasize the “I” consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial security, selectiveness in seeking friends, and universalism. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, stress the “we” consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing duties and obligations, the need for stable and predetermined friendships, group decisions and particularism. In fact, the individualism/collectivism conceptualization has its roots in an old historical debate in sociology. Because of this sociological debate, an extensive amount of literature has accumulated for more than 100 years discussing the broad contrast between individualism and collectivism: *gemeinschaft* versus *gessellschaft* (Tönnies, 1887/1957), the self-orientation versus collectivity orientation (Parsons and Shils, 1951), modernization (Inkeles, 1969, 1994), post-modernism (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Baker, 2000) and so on. In light of these definitions, it has been suggested that for a number of occasions that Turkish culture has been historically collectivist, because Turkey has long exhibited the characteristics of

a typical form of an agrarian society or subsistence economies. Agrarian societies are mostly associated with collectivistic values due to strong family ties (Kagitcibasi, 1994, 1996; Erder, 1998). Indeed, many studies conducted by western researchers (Hofstede 1991; World Values Survey, 1994; Suh et al., 1998) showed that Turkey is one of the most collectivistic countries in Europe.

Other studies conducted by one of the authors brought about two major results. First, the “contextuality” of individualistic and collectivist orientations means that living conditions, types of social relations such as family relations, intimate relations, community affairs, customs, ceremonies, etc., might have considerable effects on individuals’ orientations. Second, there is insufficient evidence to place Turkish culture in a definitely individualistic or a definitely collectivistic orientation. Additionally, it has been determined that individualistic orientation is quite high in young, educated, urban people (Yetim, 2003).

Another socio-cultural dimension is power distance. Power distance relates to what degree hierarchy and power inequalities exist and are tolerated in a society and its institutions (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance in organizations varies from small to large. An organization characterized by a large power distance is a hierarchical organization; decisions in that organization are usually taken at the top level and carried out by those at the lower levels. In contrast, an organization characterized by a small power distance is more egalitarian; decisions in that organization are made through consultations between the top and lower levels. In such an organization, there is interdependence between the boss and the subordinates and the workplace is characterized by a casual atmosphere and power sharing (Tayeb, 1988). It is generally accepted that Turkish culture is high in power distance. Lauter (1968, unpublished) conducted interviews with Turkish managers representing the banking sector and private manufacturers, and concluded that Turkish managers feel the need for constant supervision on their employees, believing that their subordinates are incompetent and untrustworthy. Lauter noted that the highly centralized authority does not seem to disturb employees or result in major organizational conflicts. As indicated before, Hofstede (1980) claimed Turks to be high on power distance and generally implied that Turks were mostly autocratic, tending to obey rules in a strict manner. Kozan (1989) asserted that Turkish managers

are apt to have a “forcing style” with subordinates, and noted that centralized decision-making, authoritarian leadership and the display of power distance all make up an environment in which differences can be handled in a flexible manner. Parallel studies done on Turkish people have emphasized some values such as respecting authority, avoiding conflicts, and choosing indirect communication over direct communication (Ronen, 1986; Kozan, 1993).

Uncertainty avoidance is another main dimension used for classifying cultures. Assessing the uncertainty avoidance as a cultural value, Hofstede (1991) indicated that in societies that are high in uncertainty avoidance, predetermined and stable conditions are preferable for both for human relations and institutions. Ambiguity leads to fear and predictability is one of the most desirable qualities for the people in a society (Shane, 1992). The need for security is salient and there is high stress and anxiety resulting from ambiguous conditions in the society. Hofstede (1980) classified Turkish society as one that scores low on uncertainty avoidance. His conclusion has been confirmed by other studies conducted by Turkish researchers and this confirmation intuitively makes sense since Turkish economy is an unstable one which does not allow people to develop long-term plans. The economy leads people to think within a present orientation rather than a future one. Many observers point to problems such as unemployment, the absence of social security, poor social services, and widespread poverty, which are rampant in urban as well as rural areas (Ayata, 1996).

Job satisfaction and its correlates have received considerable attention in western as well as non-western literature (Weiss et al., 1967; Buhian and Islam, 1996; Bhuian and Abdul-muhmin, 1997; Groot and Brink 1999). This is because job satisfaction has both positive and negative correlations with several variables. For instance, it has positive correlations with life satisfaction (Iris and Barrett, 1977; Judge et al., 1994; Yetim, 2001), organizational commitment (Fletcher and Williams, 1996; Bhuian and Abdul-muhmin, 1997; Yavas and Bodur, 1999; Jeongkoo and Shane, 2002), job autonomy (Warr, 1990) and job performance, (Birnbaum and Somers, 1993; Babin and Bales, 1996) and have negative associations with absenteeism (Muchinsky, 1977), employee turnover (Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979; Locke, 1984), role overload and ambiguity (Dejonge and Schaufeli, 1998). With respect to organizational socialization

Chao et al. (1994) found that employees' understanding of the goals, values and politics of their companies were positively and significantly related to job satisfaction. They also indicated that the congruency between employee characteristics and the characteristics preferred by management led to job satisfaction. Holland (1985) argued that congruency must exist between a person's interests, preferences and abilities, and organizational factors in the work environment in order to achieve maximum performance. Furnham and Walsh (1990) concluded that "congruent environments provide job satisfaction because people are among others with similar tastes and values. . ." (p. 188).

Culture could also have some effect on job satisfaction. Cross-cultural studies have found that employees in collectivistic countries, especially Japan, report lower job satisfaction overall (DeBoer, 1978; Lincoln et al., 1981; Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1985). While job satisfaction studies are pervasive in western societies, there are few studies done on this matter on Turkish organizations and employers. It has been established that pay, age, gender, absenteeism (Yucelt, 1982; Bilgic, 1998; Nichols et al., 2003), effort, role conflict and commitment (Menguc, 1996; Yavas and Bodur, 1999) are significantly related to job satisfaction for Turkish employees. However, the effects of cultural variables on job satisfaction of Turkish workers are not discussed in any studies. In other words, the present study is the first research designed to investigate the relationship between cultural orientations of entrepreneurs, such as individualism, collectivism, power-distance, paternalism, uncertainty avoidance, and job satisfaction of the workers at Turkish SMEs.

While there are quite a number of studies investigating the relationships between managerial practices such as TQM, quality circles and cultural variables like paternalism and collectivism in Turkish organizations (Aycan and Kanungo, 2000; Wasti, 2000), there are no studies about the influence of entrepreneurship characteristics on employee behavior in the workplace, especially in small and medium enterprises in Turkey. Indeed, SMEs in developing countries like Turkey have played a crucial role for determining the momentum of economic and social development, since their contributions represent substantial shares in local economies (95% of total economical activities for Turkey). SMEs represent virtually all the commercial enterprises in Turkey (99.8% according



to Akgemici, 2001). Their share in the total employment is 45.6% (Akgemici, 2001).

In a SME, the entrepreneur and the manager is one and the same person; he/she holds the authority on all functions of the enterprise from purchasing to marketing (Sarikaya, 1995). It's widely accepted that the founder or entrepreneur of the firm is a kind of builder, developer and keeper of the organization's culture and its values (Schein, 1992, 1996). Since a SME organization is relatively small, flexible and plain in nature, the SME entrepreneur has more opportunities for communicating with the employees face to face and for directly influencing the employees' behavior and attitudes. Furthermore, management practices which mostly stem from social and cultural characteristics of entrepreneurship shape organizational socialization processes.

A SME entrepreneur in Turkey benefits from pervasive cultural features such as collectivism and traditional management practices like paternalism while managing his/her company. Unfortunately, many studies done in Turkey have focused until now on large size firms, and they have aimed to find parallels between exported western-type managerial approaches and Turkish work culture (Wasti, 1998). They have ignored cultural values exclusive to SMEs, the managerial practices common in SMEs, and the effects of those on the quality of the work environment.

Recent views on the similarities between organizational goals and workers' expectations should be mentioned here briefly, like the "person-organization fit" by Kristof (1996). The term person-organization (P-O) fit has been used to describe the congruency between individual and organizational goals, individual preferences or needs and organizational systems or structures, and individual personality and organizational climate. The bulk of P-O-fit research has been concerned with similarities between individual and organizational values or with person-culture fit (Chatman, 1991; Cable and Judge, 1996, 1997; Meglino and Ravlin, 1998). Although this has never been tested directly, one might extend the P-O fit model to claim that a close fit between workers' cultural background and the entrepreneurship characteristics, which were mentioned above as cultural orientations, are likely to have positive impact on the job satisfaction level. When one considers the P-O approach for SMEs, one can logically see that the characteristics of entrepreneurship have deter-

mined not only how entrepreneurs behave, but also what employees expect from their organization. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the work conditions is a kind of outcome of the congruence between employees' and their employers' expectations. In fact, it has been demonstrated that the compatibility of the values held dear by individuals and the values of organizations can lead to adjustment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly et al., 1991). Based on other studies on organizations in Turkish culture, we concluded that national and regional cultural values such as individualism, collectivism, paternalism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance are the main factors leading to congruence between entrepreneurs' managerial goals and workers' expectations in SMEs.

In our view, the characteristics of SME entrepreneurs in Turkey are reflected, or crystallized, in their employment orientations and their relations with employees. Therefore, individualism, collectivism, paternalism, power distance and other socio-cultural variables which may characterize entrepreneurs should be treated within the context of real work situations like employee selections, reward allocations, etc. As a result, the present study aims at investigating the relationships between socio-cultural characteristics of entrepreneurs and employee satisfaction with work conditions in different sectors of SMEs in the city of Mersin, Turkey.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The last survey about the structure of SMEs in production and manufacturing sectors in Mersin district in Turkey was done by DIE (Turkish abbreviation of "The State Institute of Statistics") in 1999. According to that survey, there were 221 small and medium-size enterprises in Mersin each of which employed at least 10 workers. A great majority of them were located in the Organized Industrial Districts and in the Free Trade Zone. The survey indicated that, although micro-sized firms are plentiful in many sectors, SMEs in the manufacturing sector are limited in number. Since our study aims at explaining workers' overall job satisfaction, the entrepreneurs and the workers of firms with fewer than 10 workers are not included in this

study because of the unreliability of the data that could be derived from very small firms. Based on the DIE survey (DIE, 1999), our sample consisted of 221 entrepreneurs of which 217 (98.2%) are male and 4 (1.8%) are female. Since female entrepreneurs' numbers were not deemed sufficient to make statistically significant comparisons, they were excluded from the analyses. Thus, our sample basically consisted of 217 male entrepreneurs and some of their workers as representatives of the firms' workforce. Our male-entrepreneur sample's mean age was 42.4; 96% of them married, most of them having 2 children (64%).

The representative sample of workers was constructed by selecting workers from each firm according to the firm's number of employees on the basis of cluster sampling. Thus, each firm's average workers' job satisfaction is predicted from the entrepreneur's cultural orientations in addition to the characteristics of the firm. In total, 1140 workers were selected in this study to represent to construct the sample intended to determine the workers' job satisfaction level. The worker sample consisted of 690 male (60.5%) and 450 female (39.5%) employees. Female workers were mostly in the clothing and textile industry (70%). Most of the male workers were married (79%) and their average age was 26.5. On the other hand, the number of married female workers was just about equal to the number of unmarried ones (53.4%). Female workers' mean age was 23.5.

### *Materials*

According to the objectives of the present study, we developed four new scales. One of them is intended to determine entrepreneurs' individualism/collectivism orientations about employment of workers in general. The "Collectivism and Individualism in Worker Employment in SMEs" Scale (hereafter abbreviated as CIWES) had 12 items (6 for individualism, 6 for collectivism) each with a 5-point assessment system (from 1: not agree at all to 5: completely agree).

The sample items for collectivism were

- When I hire a worker generally I look for his/her sect,
- Worker's origin (e.g., his/her ethnicity or hometown) is one of the features which I care for, and

- When I hire a worker, I generally look at his/her loyalty to me and to my company.

The sample items for individualism were:

- First thing I look for when hiring a worker is whether she/he self-reliant in his/her working behavior,
- If it is possible, I prefer to hire a self-confident worker with high achievement motivation, and
- I generally prefer the worker who seeks self-fulfillment.

The construct validity of CIWES was analyzed and the result of explanatory factor analysis showed that 2 factors explained the 57% of the variance ( $\chi^2 = 586.12$ ,  $df = 220$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Cronbach-alpha for CIWES is 0.86.

The second scale was developed for measuring entrepreneurs' power distance preferences. The "Entrepreneurs Power Distance Preferences Scale" (hereafter abbreviated as EPDPS) consisted of 4 attitude expressions each with a 5-point assessment system (1: not agree at all-5: completely agree). These were:

- If I see a necessity, I usually intervene in my manager's decisions and change them,
- I think privileges for managers should be observed,
- I have regular meetings with my workers and pay attention to what are said in those meetings, and
- I think most of the workers in my firm could easily communicate with me and my managers.

The construct validity of EPDPS was evaluated by a factor analytical process. The explanatory factor analysis showed that the one factor explained 62% of variance for the entrepreneur sample ( $\chi^2 = 648.32$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It had also a high convergent validity with CIWES ( $r = 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Cronbach-alpha for EPDPS was 0.93.

Paternalism was assessed by four attitude items each with a 5-point assessment system (from 1: Not agree at all to 5: Completely agree). These were:

- The ideal boss is like a parent in our culture,
- People of authority should take care of their subordinates as they would take care of their children or close relatives,

- The ideal boss should bring a solution to his/her workers' social problems, and
- People in charge should take their subordinates under their protection.

The internal reliability of four items was 0.81. We have also looked at the convergent validity with CIWES and found a substantially high validity evidence for our sample ( $r = 0.394, p < 0.001$ ).

As for the final scale developed for this study, uncertainty avoidance is measured by one question to which respondents were asked to answer by choosing one of the three alternatives, namely "past," "present," and "future." This question was:

"While making a decision or considering a risky situation about your business, which time frame do you usually consider important?"

Workers' job satisfaction was measured using all five subscales of Roznowski's (1989) updated version of Smith et al. (1969) Job Diagnostic Index (JDI). Cronbach-alphas for revised scales ranged from 0.82 to 0.91 (Roznowski, 1989). Participants were asked to rate their coworkers, pay, promotion, supervisors, and work by marking one of three possible answers "No", "Don't know" or "Yes" for each adjective listed in JDI. Following Igbaria and Guimaraes (1993), "No" was coded 1, "Don't know" was coded 2, and "Yes" was coded 3. Again, the values used were the averaged responses for each subscale. The reliabilities for the satisfaction measures of coworkers, pay, promotions, supervisors (the boss), and work in this study 0.86, 0.80, 0.80, 0.83, 0.84 were very close to Taormina and Bauer's (2000) related findings. Our single job-satisfaction measure was obtained by combining all these satisfaction measures.

### *Procedure*

In order to prevent the employers from interfering with their workers' answers to the questionnaires, the workers to be interviewed were selected by the researchers instead of the employers. The number of workers to take the questionnaires in each firm was determined according to the information about workplaces obtained from the Mersin Chamber of Industry and Commerce and from the Mersin Small and Medium-Size Enterprises Development Center. Questionnaires were given to selected workers directly by the researchers. The average time to complete a questionnaire was 20 min. After-

wards, entrepreneurs' relevant cultural orientation scales were determined and demographic information was gathered from the entrepreneurs. The interviews with the entrepreneurs were performed directly by the researchers themselves. These interviews were completed between January and June of 2004. The data obtained from the study were analyzed using the statistical analysis software SPSS 10.0.

## RESULTS

The means, standard deviations and ranges of the variables used in the study are presented in Table I.

We have considered a limited number of demographic characteristics of the entrepreneurs who participated in the study. These are age and education level. The ages of the participating entrepreneurs were concentrated in a range from 30 to 50 (65% were in that range), mean age being 42. In other words, the "right age" for becoming an entrepreneur falls into the middle age range. That is probably because an individual generally acquires the resources necessary to initiate an enterprise only after reaching his/her middle ages (N. Yetim, 2003, unpublished).

Another demographic variable considered in the study is education level. The proportion of the participating entrepreneurs who have received primary school education was 28%. This is currently below the acceptable minimum education level of 8 years, because the required minimum education was, until recently, 5 years. In other words, about a third of the participating entrepreneurs have received below-minimum education and they form the largest group if one groups the participants according to their education levels. The university graduates form the second largest group with 26% after the primary-school graduates. The presence of a free-trade zone in Mersin makes the relative abundance of university graduates higher than what would be normally expected; university-level education is almost a necessity to operate the firms that import/export materials and goods through the Mersin seaport. The ratio of high-school graduates is 23%, and that includes a 4% of entrepreneurs who have graduated from vocational high schools. The remaining 18% of the participants have middle-school level education, which corresponds

TABLE I  
Descriptive statistics of the variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	Alpha
Demographical characteristics of entrepreneurs				
Age	42.43	9.8	26–66	
Education	2.47	1.05	1–4	
Cultural orientations of entrepreneurs				
Individualism	2.68	0.48	1–4.25	0.84
Collectivism	3.84	0.57	1–5	0.85
Paternalism	4.22	0.7	1–5	0.81
Power distance	3.71	0.61	1–5	0.93
Uncertainty avoidance	2.35	1.03	1–3	
Firm-related variables				
Worker count	28.00	13.35	10–100	
Manager count	0.8	0.49	0–4	
Job satisfaction	2.36	0.53	1–3	0.83

to the currently required 8-year minimum education level. The fact that a great majority of entrepreneurs, especially those aged 35 or older, have not gone beyond a high-school education seems to show that the entrepreneurship in Mersin region is still viewed like an extension of traditional artisanship.

The identifying character of the firms was the number of workers and entrepreneurs. The number of workers in a typical firm in the sample may not be always exact, because that number usually varies due to the practice of temporary employment. The number considered to be correct for the purpose of this study is the number of permanently employed workers. Using this definition, the number of workers in most firms (74%) varies between 10 and 40.

A striking finding about the sample is that there are generally a limited number of managers in the firms evaluated in this study. Professional managers are considered to be necessary in a few firms that have too many owners or partners, and in certain firms operating in specific locations such as organized industrial districts and the free-trade zone. For example, firms that are doing manufacturing and production work outsourced by foreign companies. The scarcity of professional managers makes it clear why entrepreneurs carry so much importance in SMEs.

Entrepreneurs' cultural orientations considered in this study are individualism, collectivism, paternalism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. The mean values relating to these orientations are presented in Table I.

### *Correlations between Variables*

The correlations between mean values of permanent job satisfaction index and the characteristics of entrepreneurs are presented in Table II.

It has been found that workers' job satisfaction and the two entrepreneur characteristics, namely paternalism and collectivism, are positively correlated at a moderate level. In other words, the more an entrepreneur feels paternalistic or collectivistic towards the workers, generally the more satisfied the workers are. Paternalistic tendencies of an entrepreneur implies that he will have more interest in helping workers even with their private lives, than an autocratic entrepreneur. Collectivistic tendencies, on the other hand, are highly apparent in the hiring practices of entrepreneurs who value solidarity. This is shown, for example, in their preference of hiring workers from their own regions.

Workers' job satisfaction and power distance are positively correlated at a significant level. A high level of power distance indicates the entrepreneur's unwillingness to allow workers' participation in arranging production. The distanced attitude of the entrepreneur makes the workers less inclined to express their different opinions and thus power clashes between owners and workers are generally not experienced at all. Although such a situation reminds one of an authoritative managerial style, one cannot claim that it makes the relationship between the entrepreneur and workers too cold and too distanced. The workers in this situation place a higher value on the "entrepreneur's opinion" and they build their satisfaction on that basis.

Entrepreneur's age and education level have a weak, but barely significant, correlation with the workers' overall satisfaction level. An entrepreneur at an advanced age may show more tolerance towards the workers thanks to his/her accumulated experience with different work situations. There is also the possibility that paternalistic tendencies are more often observed in the management of



TABLE II  
Correlations between variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	1.00							
Education	-0.21***	1.00						
Individualism	-0.37***	0.41***	1.00					
Collectivism	0.39***	-0.14**	-0.26***	1.00				
Paternalism	0.52***	-0.10	-0.30***	0.59***	1.00			
Power distance	0.27***	-0.09	0.08	0.30***	0.38***	1.00		
Uncertainty avoidance	-0.08	-0.08	0.13**	-0.16**	0.09	-0.11*	1.00	
Job satisfaction	0.11*	0.15**	-0.17**	0.42***	0.49***	0.23**	0.09	1.00

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

older entrepreneurs than in the management of younger ones. Thus, the weak positive correlation between age and job satisfaction may be an indirect one.

Access to higher education for an entrepreneur also seems to affect workers' satisfaction in a positive manner. However, this does mean that an entrepreneur who has had more education has a more limited power-exertion range and displays less paternalistic tendencies. Being an indicator of modernism, education goes perfectly well with paternalistic, collectivistic and high power-distance orientations. Indeed, while education has a highly significant, positive correlation with individualism, it has a weak and negative correlation with collectivism. Education's correlations with paternalism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance are not significant. We conclude that a higher education level boosts individualistic tendencies, but it is not related to other cultural orientations.

There is a significantly negative correlation between the entrepreneur's individualistic cultural orientation and the workers' job satisfaction. Individualistic hiring policies followed by entrepreneurs, such as considering only highly educated and skilled workers, affects workers' job satisfaction in a negative manner. This may be a result of the negative consequences of favorable treatment and better compensation received by better trained and skilled workers. In short, individualistic policies followed by an entrepreneur can be treated as a negative factor that damages the solidarity and harmony within an organization.

There are significant correlations between some of the entrepreneurs' cultural orientations, themselves. For example, strong, positive correlations are found between paternalism and collectivism, and individualism and educational level. Significantly positive correlations also exist between power distance and paternalism, and between power distance and collectivism.

The entrepreneur's age show positive correlations with collectivism and power distance and a significantly negative correlation with individualism. All of these correlations seem to be meaningful within their own context. The significant correlations between certain cultural orientations like collectivism, paternalism and power distance imply that these three variables are prime indicators of a lasting socio-cultural structure and organization.

*The Variables That Predict the Employees' Job Satisfaction*

In order to determine the organizational and entrepreneurial characteristics which control the workers' job satisfaction, a three-stage hierarchical regression analysis was done. Naturally, job satisfaction was the dependent variable of this analysis. In the first stage of the analysis, entrepreneur's age and education level were used as independent variables in order to measure their effects. In the second stage, the two organizational characteristics, namely the number of workers and the number of managers, were added to the analysis as new independent variables. In the third and final stage, entrepreneurs' cultural orientations, namely individualism, collectivism, paternalism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance, were added to the analysis. Thus, in addition to the effects of demographical and organizational characteristics, the effects of the variations in cultural orientations were tested by using rigorous analysis techniques.

From the beta values and the  $R^2$  values presented in Table III, independent variables that have been added to the analysis in stages do explain the variations in the dependent variable to a significant degree. To state this in more detail, 49% of the observed variation in the job satisfaction of workers has been explained through the variations in the independent variables considered in this analysis. Furthermore, each new variable group introduced in each stage has explained more of the variation and thus improved the accuracy of the regression model. In the first stage, age ( $\beta = 0.18$ ) and education level ( $\beta = 0.22$ ) explained a significant portion (12%) of the variation in the job satisfaction ( $F(2,214) = 17.8, p < 0.001$ ). Among the variables added to the analysis in the second stage, the number of workers alone ( $\beta = 0.16$ ) has explained an additional 6% of the job-satisfaction variation ( $F$  change (2, 212) = 8.34,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the last stage, workers' job satisfaction was best explained by paternalism ( $\beta = 0.32$ ) and then by collectivism ( $\beta = 0.19$ ). Contributions of other entrepreneurial orientations like power distance and uncertainty avoidance were found to be weak, yet significant ( $\beta = 0.15$  and  $\beta = 0.11$ , respectively). As it was expected, the controlling effect of individualism on job satisfaction is insignificant. In summary, cultural orientations of the entrepreneur explain 31% of the variations in workers' job satisfaction ( $F$  change (5, 207) = 47.89,  $p < 0.001$ ).

TABLE III

The results of regression analysis of variables explaining the variations in job satisfaction

	$\beta$	$R^2$
Demographical characteristics of entrepreneurs		
Age	0.18*	0.12***
Education	0.22**	
Firm-related variables		
Worker count	0.16**	0.06**
Manager count	0.07	
Cultural orientations of entrepreneurs		
Individualism	-0.06	0.31***
Collectivism	0.19**	
Paternalism	0.32***	
Power distance	0.15**	
Uncertainty avoidance	0.11*	
Total $R$		0.68***
Total $R^2$		0.49***

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## DISCUSSION

In this study, the relationships between socio-cultural characteristics of SME entrepreneurs and their workers' overall job satisfaction have been examined. In developing countries like Turkey, SMEs play important roles in the national economy due to their effectiveness in expanding employment and their contributions to the trade policies aimed at entering the world markets. SME entrepreneurs also hold important positions in the activities that accelerate the economic growth in developing countries. Naturally, the important contributions of SMEs as organizations and the contributions of entrepreneurs go hand-in-hand and that stresses the importance of the harmony between the entrepreneur and workers. The effectiveness of Turkish SMEs that make up 98% of the national economy is determined by the strength of that entrepreneur-worker harmony.

This study has shown that entrepreneurial-managerial characteristics of entrepreneurs that arise from their socio-cultural backgrounds also affect the workers' job expectations and job satisfaction.

It should also be stated that, the fact that the “small enterprises” concept is so readily prescribed as a quick remedy to developing countries’ chronic unemployment problems not only prompts individuals to start their own enterprises, but also causes the workers of those small enterprises to see the work itself as a reward. Therefore, job satisfaction of workers is also directly affected by the socio-economic conditions that direct small entrepreneurs to starting new SMEs. The efforts to adapt Western-type managerial styles and or create organizational-managerial cultures based on Western business philosophies have only limited effects in developing countries like Turkey. The reason is that, the “*common language*” between the entrepreneurs and workers of SMEs in Turkey is the fundamental factor that determines the overall job satisfaction in those enterprises. The variables that we considered to be the entrepreneurs’ cultural orientations in this study make up the content of this common language. Both entrepreneurs and workers are affected by the basic components of the organizational culture, namely individualism, collectivism, power distance, paternalism and uncertainty avoidance. Within this context, our study has confirmed the result predicted by the organizational compatibility models. In other words, the compatibility between the expectations and tendencies of entrepreneurs and workers determine the job satisfaction to a significant degree.

This study presents an entrepreneur profile similar to the profile that is sketched by other studies done in Turkey. Most of the entrepreneurs participating in our study fall into the middle-age group. Their average education level leans toward higher-education. The average education level of the entrepreneurs in organized industrial and trade districts is especially high. As was stated before, SME entrepreneurs generally handle the management activities themselves. There is also other evidence that the owner/manager model is encountered quite often in Turkish SME’s (Sarıkaya, 1995). However, in cases where the number of workers exceeds 40, a manager and one or more clerical worker are needed. Entrepreneurs generally avoid delegating their management authority and thus entrepreneurs’ actions all affect the workers directly (N. Yetim, 2003, unpublished).

It is interesting to note that entrepreneurs demonstrate quite a few of paternalistic tendencies that seem to be direct results of the per-

vading national culture and business environment. In their relationships with their employees, entrepreneurs seem to lean more towards collectivism and increase the power distance.

The focus of the entrepreneurs on collectivistic values in their hiring practices shows that “compatibility” is important in ongoing group relations. For example, since Mersin is a city that frequently receives large numbers of immigrants from Eastern Turkey, the entrepreneurs from Eastern regions have the opportunity to prefer hiring from their own regions. Again, the fact that entrepreneurs do not pay much attention to workers’ education levels may be related to their concerns about labor costs. That seems to be especially true for business sectors that target export markets; those firms lower costs by hiring unskilled workers rather than skilled ones.

The entrepreneurs who participated in this study display highly paternalistic tendencies. Since Turkish entrepreneurs consider themselves responsible for “providing the worker’s bread,” they also take supporting roles in their workers’ special situations like marriage ceremonies, male children’s circumcision, sickness, etc. Such supportive and protective attitudes can increase the respectability of an entrepreneur in his region of business. A supportive/protecting entrepreneur also has an increased chance of becoming the sole authoritative voice that ensures the harmony in the workplace. It is known that the preference of increased support from the employer causes the workers to avoid conflicts and lean towards collectivistic tendencies that increase the group harmony. Kozan (1989) found that employees tended to accommodate their superiors’ wishes, but also noted that workers avoided conflicts with their equals while they tended to bear down on their subordinates. Several other studies which were mentioned before confirm that collectivism suppresses competition among peers in Turkish organizations and instead, encourages avoiding conflicts.

Higher paternalistic tendencies of SME entrepreneurs of Turkey do not result in lower power-distance in the SME culture. On the contrary, entrepreneurs also display higher power-distance tendencies. Entrepreneurs usually execute their own decisions as “the person who speaks last” and usually avoid referring to the opinions of their employees. These tendencies are continued for the sake of preventing conflicts and firmly establishing a centralized management approach in the workplace. Indeed, the paternalistic relationships at work

environments accrue from the patriarchal–paternalistic relationships (re)produced from the social institutions such as Turkish family structure (Kandiyoti, 1988), religion, i.e. Islam (Erman, 2001) and the state. It is possible to observe the paternalistic patterns in the family (the father and the children), in the religion (God and ‘his’ subjects), and finally in politics (The father state and the citizens).

The entrepreneurs who participated in our study showed a low level of uncertainty avoidance. Since Turkey is a country experiencing a high level of uncertainty in its economy, it is natural that the uncertainty avoidance is so low. Most studies done in Turkey have confirmed this finding. Entrepreneurs consider only the present while making decisions instead of orienting themselves towards the future.

Our study has also revealed that workers’ job satisfaction is highly influenced by entrepreneurs’ socio-cultural orientations. The discussions presented above confirm this argument. Entrepreneurs’ paternalistic tendencies and workers’ expectations toward a paternalistic supervision are compatible and that, in turn, determines the overall level of job satisfaction. This compatibility between workers’ expectations and entrepreneur behavior may imply that paternalism is a characteristic that workers have come to expect to see in their employers’ behavior. In a socio-economic environment lacking satisfactory social security and strong worker organizations and in the face of a chronic unemployment problem, workers come to expect a supportive attitude from their employer and the paternalistic tendencies of the entrepreneur becomes the most important factor in workers’ job satisfaction.

The second most important factor that determines the workers’ job satisfaction is collectivism. Collectivism signifies a structure in which values of social life, such as consideration for group relationships, loyalty to group norms and solidarity, are emphasized. Workers want to enjoy the satisfaction resulting from continuity of group relationships and living together in order to feel full satisfaction from work. For example, being of the same ethnic origin and sharing the same religious beliefs lead to an increased harmony between fellow workers. An entrepreneur with collectivistic tendencies can alter the job satisfaction of workers because he values the group harmony in the workplace.

According to our findings, power distance and uncertainty avoidance are prominent among factors that explain the variation

in the workers' job satisfaction. A stable, centralized power structure and the superiority of the entrepreneur in decision-making are what workers have come to expect in the workplace. Workers tend to follow the decisions made by their employer, whom they see as someone with a higher status and more knowledge than themselves. It has been found that workers do not approve invitations for sharing the authority, for example when they are asked to participate in decisions or to take charge of a management position (Nichols et al. 2002). Workers seem to prefer to be the performing hand of an entrepreneur who thinks of the right things on their behalf.

Finally, a rise in the uncertainty avoidance may also result in an increased job satisfaction if it at least raises the expectation of stable employment. In other words, an entrepreneur's focus on the future may cause him/her to invest more time and effort on workers and the firm.

In summary, this study has determined that socio-cultural orientations of the SME entrepreneurs significantly affect the job satisfaction of their workers. Therefore, it is essential that programs aimed at improving the overall quality of the work environment in Turkey should focus on the cultural values shared by Turkish workers and employers instead of merely adopting business models and management practices imported from foreign cultures. The changes in entrepreneurial cultural orientations resulting from global trends should be closely followed and controlled in order to maintain an improved level of job satisfaction. Future studies should try to determine the manner in which the international business values affect Turkish business culture.

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