

# **Attributions for Personal Achievement Outcomes among Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish University Students**

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## **Abstract**

While many studies have been done on the attributional styles of individuals in the North America and East Asia, few have been conducted in Islamic cultures. The present research attempts to both correct this neglect and to replicate the results that have been obtained concerning East Asian samples. We investigated the attributional thinking of Turkish ( $n = 61$ ), Japanese ( $n = 94$ ) and Chinese ( $n = 71$ ) university students. All three samples believed internal causes were more potent than external factors for both success and failure, and for the Chinese and Turks, internal factors were more potent for success than for failure. For the Japanese external factors were more potent for success than for failure, but for the Chinese and Turks external factors were more potent for failure than for success. While it has been argued that the normality of self-enhancing bias might be applicable only to Western cultures, we suggest that a different sort of bias may be operating. The students in the present samples seem to be neither particularly self-enhancing nor self-effacing. Rather they even-handedly accept both credit for their successes and blame for their failures.

Many studies have been conducted on the attributional styles of both well-adjusted and ostensibly maladjusted individuals, primarily within the United States (see Weiner, 2001 for a recent review) but also, in recent years, in East Asia, primarily Japan and countries with large Chinese populations (see Crittenden, 1996, and Hong, 2001, for reviews). Few studies have been conducted elsewhere (primarily in Africa, summarized in Smith & Bond, 1998), but very few, if any, in Islamic cultures. Part of the purpose of this study is to redress that neglect by investigating attributional patterns in a non-North American and non-East Asian group. At the same time, we have attempted to replicate the results obtained in previous East Asian samples. Hence, the present study examines attributional patterns in Turkish, Japanese, and Chinese samples of university students.

Individuals in Western samples often take credit for their successes while rejecting blame for their failures

(Schneider, Hastorf, & Ellsworth, 1979; Smith & Bond, 1998). Typically, East Asians do the reverse (Heine & Lehman, 1995; Kitayama, Takagi, & Matsumoto, 1995; Kurman, 2003; Shikanai, 1978, 1983, 1984, summarized in Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Western samples also rate themselves as consistently above average in positive characteristics, and below average in negative characteristics (Brown, 1986;), while Japanese samples tend to rate themselves in the opposite way (Kobayashi & Brown, 2003). In Western clinical practice, it has been observed that depressed individuals and others suffering from poor mental health have more balanced attributional patterns compared to well-adjusted individuals (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Japanese patterns resemble those of depressed and low self-esteem Westerners. To the extent that high self-esteem is both a desideratum and a norm in America, one could say that normal Japanese resemble abnormal Americans. Yet it cannot seriously be maintained that the majority of the people in a country of 164 million are pathological. The East Asian pattern has been explained in terms of modesty or moderate response styles (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Kurman & Sriram, 2002). Japanese, for example, have been described as suffering from “illusions of averageness” (Heine & Lehman, 1995). Some relevant studies have been conducted in Chinese ethnic communities (Crittenden, 1996; Farruggia, Chen, Greenberger, Dmitrieva, & Macek, 2004; Kurman, 2001; Spencer-Rogers, Wang, & Hou, 2004; Tafarodi, Lo, Yamaguchi, Lee, & Katsura, 2004; Yik, Bond, & Paulus, 1998) although very few in China itself, but those that have been suggest that Chinese college students tend to think more like Japanese college students than like North American college students. What has sometimes been overlooked, however, is the possibility that the Western pattern is the exceptional case. To ascertain whether this is in fact the case, one would need to collect data from a wide range of cultures. The present research is one step in that direction.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

Participants were 94 Japanese (60 male, 34 female), 71 Chinese (8 male, 63 female) and 61 Turkish (28 male, 33 female) students attending universities in Chigasaki, Japan, Beijing, China, and Ankara, Turkey, respectively. Males and females did not differ with regard to age within each national group, but the Turkish students, at 20.7 years, were on average approximately two years older ( $F(2,223) = 131.37, p < .0001$ ) than the Chinese and Japanese (whose mean ages, 18.7, and 18.5 respectively, did not significantly differ). Sex ratios are clearly unbalanced in two of the three samples, but we found no significant differences due to sex. Participation was voluntary and no student declined although five male Turkish participants filled out the questionnaires inappropriately (using the same response for all items). These were not analyzed and not included in the sample size above.

### *Questionnaires*

The questionnaire contained 16 items concerning attitudes toward the general sources of personal success and failure and a variety of related issues and was adapted from the existing literature. The eight relevant items for the present research were: (1) “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because of lack of ability,” (2) “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because I didn’t try enough,” (3) “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because it was too difficult”, (4) “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because of bad luck,” (5) “When I succeed at something I try to do, it is usually because of my ability,” (6) “When I

succeed at something I try to do, it is usually because I tried hard,” (7) “When I succeed at something I try to do, it is usually because I was lucky,” and (8) “When I succeed at something I try to do, it is usually because it wasn’t difficult”.<sup>1</sup> The response options were provided in a six step equal-appearing interval Likert-type format, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), in the appropriate languages. Items were intentionally written to have high face-validity and were interpreted straightforwardly. Although there are merits to using multi-item scales, there are also drawbacks (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001) and the authors felt that for the purposes of the present research, the most highly face-valid approach would be preferable. Thus a score of 6 on the item “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because of bad luck” represents a high degree of endorsement of the efficacy of the particular external factor of luck in producing failure outcomes, while a score of 12 on the two items “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because of bad luck” and “When I fail at something I try to do, it is usually because it was difficult” represents a high degree of endorsement of the efficacy of external factors generally in producing failure outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

The questionnaires were first written in English and then translated into Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish by bilinguals who were ignorant of the research objectives and then, following procedures outlined by Behling & Law (2000), back translated into English to ensure accuracy. They were then pilot tested with small groups of demographically comparable students in each of the three target countries and revised for clarity when necessary.

The questionnaires were administered in groups ranging from 20 to 30 students between December 2001 (China), and April 2002 (Japan and Turkey).

### *Results*

One-way ANOVAs indicate that in none of the three groups did male and female means differ for any item at  $p = .05$  or higher. Consequently we conducted no further within-group, between-sex analyses.

#### *Within Groups Analyses*

We conducted single-sample  $t$ -tests against the hypothetical scale midpoint of 7 to ascertain whether the three groups rated internal factors as more potent than external factors in the two outcome conditions. As Table 1 shows, the Japanese endorsed effort, ability, and luck, and rejected task, as causes of success. They also endorsed effort and ability as causes for failure, but rejected both luck and task.

The Turks endorsed ability and effort as causes of success and rejected luck and task. They endorsed effort as causes for failure and reject ability. They rejected luck as causes of failure and were ambivalent about task.

The Chinese students endorsed effort and ability as causes of success and rejected luck and task. They endorsed effort as a cause of failure, rejected ability and luck, and were ambivalent about task.

All three groups endorsed effort and ability for success and rejected task. They agreed that failure is the result of lack of effort. Neither the Chinese nor Turks endorsed lack of ability or task as causes of failure (they rejected ability and were ambivalent about task). Only the Japanese endorsed lack of ability, and rejected task, as a cause of failure. None of the groups endorsed luck as a cause of failure, but the Japanese endorsed luck as a cause of success (although not to a high degree).

#### *Effect of Locus on Outcomes*

We used paired sample  $t$  tests to examine the relative importance of internal versus external factors on

success as opposed to failure within each of the three samples. The Japanese students rated internal factors higher than external factors for both success ( $t(94) = 6.74, p < .0001$ ) and for failure ( $t(94) = 11.53, p < .0001$ ). Internal factors were not significantly higher for success than for failure ( $t(94) = 1.58, p < .12$ ), but external factors were higher for success than for failure ( $t(94) = 6.61, p < .0001$ ). The Chinese students rated internal factors higher than external factors for success ( $t(71) = 11.64, p < .0001$ ) and marginally so for failure ( $t(71) = 1.89, p < .07$ ). They rated internal factors higher for success than for failure ( $t(71) = 3.93, p < .001$ ) and rated external factors higher for failure than for success ( $t(71) = 5.29, p < .0001$ ). The Turkish students rated internal factors higher than external factors for both success ( $t(61) = 12.06, p < .0001$ ) and for failure ( $t(61) = 4.86, p < .0001$ ). They rated internal factors higher for success than for failure ( $t(61) = 6.40, p < .0001$ ) and external factors higher for failure than for success ( $t(61) = 2.99, p < .01$ ).

### *Between Groups Analyses*

We conducted one-way ANOVAs followed by Tukey pairwise contrasts. In view of the unknown propensities for scale use among the samples, we set alpha at  $p = .001$ , rather than the more conventional  $.05$  or  $.01$  levels. The results reported are significant at  $p = .001$  or greater.

The three samples disagreed as to the effect of external factors on success ( $F(2,223) = 29.46, p < .0001$ ), the Japanese rating external factors as more important ( $M = 6.926, SD = 1.68$ ) than the Chinese ( $M = 4.89, SD = 1.85$ ) and Turks ( $M = 5.26, SD = 2.02$ ). There was consensus on the extent to which external factors affect failure ( $F(2,223) = .33, p < .72$ ; see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). The Chinese and Turkish students differed with respect to the effect of internal factors on success ( $F(2,223) = 6.57, p = .002$ ; Chinese ( $M = 8.04, SD = 1.78$ ) Turkish ( $M = 9.08, SD = 1.46$ ). Japanese ( $M = 8.65, SD = 1.69$ ). The Chinese ( $M = 6.86, SD = 1.85$ ) and Turkish students ( $M = 7.52, SD = 1.49$ ) rated internal factors lower in failure ( $F(2,223) = 17.65, p < .0001$ ) than the Japanese students did ( $M = 8.31, SD = 1.37$ ).

We next looked at the four separate factors in both success and failure outcome conditions, again using one-way ANOVAs with post-hoc Tukey contrasts. The Japanese students rated effort higher than the Chinese students did ( $F(2,223) = 5.23, p < .006$ ), while the Turkish students rated ability higher as a cause of success than the Japanese and Chinese students ( $F(2,223) = 13.82, p < .0001$ ). The Japanese rated luck higher as a cause of success than the Turkish and Chinese students ( $F(2,223) = 36.16, p < .0001$ ). The Japanese also rated task higher as a cause of success than the Chinese students - ( $F(2,223) = 8.86, p < .0002$ ).

There were no significant differences among the three groups as to the effect of effort on failure ( $F(2,223) = 2.75, p < .07$ ). The Japanese rated ability higher as a cause of failure than the Chinese and Turkish students - ( $F(2,223) = 20.21, p < .0001$ ). The Japanese rated luck higher as a cause of failure than the Turkish students ( $F(2,223) = 5.99, p < .003$ ). The Japanese also rated task as a more important cause of failure than the Chinese and Turkish students did ( $F(2,223) = 9.47, p < .0001$ ).

### *Response Styles*

Response style effects can occur on the cultural level and can complicate interpretation. Individuals from one group may gravitate toward one part of the scale, systematically preferring, for example, the middle or the extreme ends, or may avoid one part of the scale altogether (Behling & Law, 2000; Brown 1995; Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Choi & Choi; Johnson, Kulesa, Cho, & Shavitt, 2005; Mahler, 1976; Paulus, 1991; 2002; Reid,

1990), or may systematically understate or exaggerate their actual beliefs and sentiments (Heine, Lehman, Peng, and Greenholtz, 2002). Hui & Triandis (1989: 298), for example, argue that in Asian cultures use of the midrange of the scale is an expression of “modesty,” while in Mediterranean cultures (such as Turkey), extreme responses are more “sincere”. Similarly, it cannot be assumed that the translation equivalents for “slightly” and “strongly” carry the same connotations in Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish<sup>1</sup>. We hypothesized, however, that while individuals might understate or overstate their degree of agreement with a statement on the questionnaire, they would not respond in a direction opposite to their true sentiments. Accordingly, we reduced the interval data to categorical data, thereafter treating the response options 4-6 as “agree” and 1-3 as “disagree”. This vitiates the measure’s sensitivity, as Paulhus (1991, p. 49) notes, but it does render between-group comparisons more meaningful.

### *Categorical Analyses*

We first conducted a series of omnibus chi-square tests to examine internal versus external attributions for both success and for failure. In view of the improbability of the student samples endorsing attributional beliefs that are directly the opposite of their true sentiments, we set alpha at the more conventional  $p = .01$  level. (As before, in the interests of brevity, the calculated values for the pairwise contrasts are not reported, but are significant at  $p = .01$  or greater). Despite an apparent preference among the Japanese students for more moderate responses (abundantly documented elsewhere: see Brown 2003c; Chen, Lee, & Stevenson 1995; Choi & Choi, 2002; Reid, ), particularly compared to the Turks, the results were generally consistent with the ANOVA results reported above.

The distributions of endorsement to rejection differed for all four causes in both outcome conditions. Chi-square scores ranged from a low of  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 10.16, p < .006$  to  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 55.80 (p < .0001)$ .

We then conducted follow-up pairwise chi-square tests where indicated. With regard to the role of ability in success, the tendency to agree differed within the three groups, with the Turks agreeing more readily ( $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 15.40, p < .0005$ ). With regard to the role of ability in failure, the Japanese differed from both Chinese and Turks and in fact, actually endorsed the item by a ratio of more than 2 to 1 ( $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 34.49, p < .0001$ ). With regard to the role of effort in success,  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 12.06$  was significant at  $p < .003$ , primarily due to a large difference in the tendency of the Japanese to endorse the item compared to the Chinese. With regard to the role of effort in failure,  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 10.16$  was again significant ( $p < .006$ ), with the difference primarily due to the Japanese tendency to endorse the item compared to the Chinese. With regard to the role of luck in success, the groups again differed, with the Chinese and Turks rejecting it, and the Japanese actually endorsing it by a ratio of more than 2 to 1 ( $\chi^2(2, N = 225) = 55.30, p < .0001$ ). With regard to the role of luck in failure,  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 12.83$  was significant at  $p < .002$ , with the Japanese rejecting the item to a lesser degree than the Chinese and Turks. With regard to the role of task difficulty in success,  $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 10.53$  was significant at  $p < .006$  due to the Japanese tendency to endorse the item to a greater extent than either the Chinese or Turks. Lastly, regarding the role of task difficulty in failure, the groups differed ( $\chi^2(2, N = 226) = 25.20, p < .0001$ ), with the Japanese more likely to disagree.

Finally, we counted the number of endorsements and rejections within each factor (ICS, ECS, ICF, and ECF). Any score of 1-3 was counted as a rejection of the cause and any score of 4-6 was counted as an endorsement<sup>2</sup>. Participants were free to endorse both, either, or neither of the two factors in each of the two

outcome conditions. Thus the “endorsement score” (the total number of endorsements) could range from 0 to 2 for success and 0 to 2 for failure. The total number of possible attributions for each outcome condition would be 188 for Japan, 142 for China and 122 for Turkey, depending on whether the subject endorsed one, both, or neither of the factors, for the outcome condition in question. Since the data in reality are interval level, they can be analyzed either with chi-square or one-way ANOVA. These results will be essentially identical, but the ANOVA is more illuminating in that it provides a more perspicuous data summary (mean number of endorsements per cause and outcome) and allows us to identify the source of the distributional differences by way of Turkey post-hoc contrasts.

As Table 2 shows, the Chinese students were less likely to endorse both internal causes for success ( $F(2,233) = 9.14, p = .0002$ ). The Chinese students endorsed 1.31 causes ( $SD = 0.69$ ), compared to 1.64 ( $SD = 0.62$ ) for the Japanese students and 1.74 ( $SD = 0.53$ ) for the Turkish students. The Japanese were more likely to endorse both external causes for success ( $F(2,233) = 25.31, p < .0001$ ). The Japanese endorsed 1.11 causes ( $SD = 0.78$ ) while the Chinese endorsed .35 ( $SD = 0.56$ ) and the Turks endorsed .52 causes ( $SD = 0.77$ ) causes. The Japanese were also more likely to endorse both internal causes for failure ( $F(2,233) = 22.59, p < .0001$ ). The Japanese endorsed 1.58 causes ( $SD = 0.58$ ) while the Chinese endorsed 1.0 ( $SD = 0.63$ ) and the Turks endorsed 1.20 ( $SD = 0.48$ ). There were no significant differences in endorsement of external causes for failure ( $F(2,233) = 1.70, p = .1842$ ). The Japanese endorsed .68 ( $SD = 0.71$ ), the Chinese endorsed .78 ( $SD = 0.66$ ), and the Turks endorsed .88 ( $SD = 0.71$ ) external causes for failure.

### *Discussion*

All three samples of students endorsed internal causes for success more than external causes. The Japanese and Turkish samples also endorsed internal causes more than external causes for failure, while the Chinese sample showed a clear trend in the same direction. The Japanese students attributed success and failure equally to internal causes, while the Turkish and Chinese students made more internal attributions for success than for failure. The Japanese students were more likely to make external attributions for success than for failure, compared to the Turkish and Chinese students.

Assuming that the paradigmatic, “normal” attributional pattern is self-enhancing, it appears that the Japanese, Turkish, and Chinese students are “abnormal” at least in the sense that both success and failure are attributed internally. Moreover, the Japanese showed a distinct self-critical pattern, attributing failure less to external than to internal factors. The Chinese showed the “normal” pattern, with external factors being held more responsible (approximately twice as much so) for failure than for success (although still substantially less so than internal factors). The Turkish students also showed an “abnormal” pattern of attribution, although only slightly, with internal factors more often endorsed than external for failure and less often endorsed for failure than for success.

If there is a Chinese cult of effort, as Smith and Bond (1998) claim, it apparently is not unique to China, because the Japanese subscribe to it as much as the Chinese, if not more (see also Heine et al., 2001). Nor is it uniquely East Asian: The Turkish students endorse effort as causative of both success and failure as strongly as the Japanese and Chinese students do. Smith and Bond speculate that a tendency to make effort attributions may be a characteristic of all collectivistic cultures, which Japan, China, and Turkey have since at least Hofstede (1980) been assumed to be. In fact, effort attributions may not be unique to East Asia or even to collectivistic

cultures. One respected researcher (Weiner, 2001) claims that internal attributions, and in particular effort attributions, are “intimately” linked to Protestantism (p. 26) and thence to individualism (p. 29). If internal and effort attributions are the norm in both collectivistic and individualistic cultures, that would appear to suggest that they are the universal norm. If this is the case, deviations from the normal attributional pattern may still be diagnostic of individual level differences in, for example, self-esteem, but are not likely to be of great value in explaining cultural differences.

#### *Relevance and Implications for Foreign Language Education*

Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish students do not appear to believe that their learning outcomes will be limited by their inherent abilities (and in Japanese students at least, this belief develops, or is taught, at an early age (Yoshida et al., cited in Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Proficiency in English is one type of learning outcome. Since effort is the key to success in learning English, what clearly matters is how the effort will be applied. Language is multifaceted, with both declarative and procedural components, but as MacWhinney points out, “the single biggest task facing the language learner is the acquisition of new words” (MacWhinney, 1996, p.10). It seems reasonable then to focus efforts where they are most likely to yield maximum gains. Communication is the ultimate goal of most students (Brown, 2004) –although a few simply want to pass tests (Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004), but communication is, to put it conservatively, enhanced by productive and receptive command of a stock of lexical resources adequate for the encoding and decoding of the sort of messages that language users customarily wish to exchange, as well as the accomplishment of various transactional purposes. The English lexicon is possibly the largest among the languages of the world, and estimates of the size of a typical literate native speaker’s vocabulary ranges from several “tens of thousands” of word families at minimum (Nation, 2001) up to “more than 60,000 words” (Bloom, 2000). However, studies show that a considerably smaller vocabulary of perhaps 2,000 words is sufficient for reading general purpose texts (Nation) and for basic oral communication in a variety of situations. Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish are typologically and genetically unrelated to English, and so students are obliged to learn numerous words without appreciable benefit from complete “cognate mapping”, which occurs when a word in L2 closely resembles a word with the same meaning in the learner’s L1. Learning a word requires learning a (potentially new) meaning, learning a new form, and establishing a “retrieval cue” that will associate the form with the meaning, and vice-versa (Keenan & MacWhinney, cited in MacWhinney, 1996). Fortunately, English loan words are abundant in Japan (Blair, 1997; Daulton, 1998; Hogan, 2003; Miller, 1967; Sellner, 2004, June; Tomoda, 1999), and Turkey (Bozer, 1990), although less so in China where there apparently are political and cultural imperatives to avoid intrasentential code-switching (Gumperz, 1982) between native Chinese and foreign vocabulary (Gao, 2000). In Japan at least, hundreds, if not thousands, of English words are partially known to most college age students, albeit in forms that a native speaker of English may not recognize. Nevertheless, even in this modified form, these words provide some of the learning benefits of “analogic mapping” (MacWhinney, 1996, p. 11), hence can effectively give even beginning students a considerable vocabulary with minimum effort (Daulton, 1998). Students can easily be taught the most productive word formation processes, thereby augmenting their vocabulary by as many as a half dozen new words in addition to the already familiar *gairaigo* form, which could serve as the retrieval cue.

The key to learning success, as students believe, is effort, and effort can be operationalized as “time on

task”. In other words, the more the newly learned vocabulary is spoken, read, written, heard, or mentally rehearsed, the more firmly it will be encoded in memory and the more efficiently it will be retrieved when needed. MacWhinney estimates that 50% of learner variance can be explained by “effort” (time spent on the relevant learning activity). MacWhinney also remarks that, as teachers already know, success is rewarding. For a student whose ambition is to be able to communicate in English (Brown, 2004a), simply being able to understand and make him or herself understood can be reinforcing. Thus, it may be advisable to reward the student’s effort spent on learning new vocabulary by providing opportunities to use the vocabulary in actual communicative situations. In a classroom situation in the students’ native country, the most available communicative situation is the classroom itself. This being so, new vocabulary to be learned should be selected by the teacher and should be used soon and at regularly spaced intervals. Nation (2001) recommends selecting vocabulary to be learned according to three criteria: (1) frequency lists, (2) immediate need, and (3) learners’ interests. How this can be done however, is the topic for another paper.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

Among the limitations of the present research are the discrepancies in age between the Turkish and the Japanese and Chinese samples. Sex ratios are also unbalanced between the samples. No between-sex differences were found within the samples but this may have been a consequence of the small sample sizes. The samples also differed with respect to their representativeness. Relatively more Japanese than Turks and Chinese graduate from four year colleges (State Education Commission, 1996, cited in Li, 2002; Status of Education, 2002), and the three universities differ considerably in national prestigiousness. The Turkish university in particular was highly prestigious, in a country where few people attend universities. The Japanese university was not known as one of the premier universities in Japan, where relatively many people attend universities. Thus, conclusions drawn from comparisons between these samples must be highly tentative.

Unfortunately, access to the Chinese and Turkish samples did not allow replication of these results, but corroborating data derived from more extensive measures and different but demographically comparable Japanese samples have replicated the results reported herein (Brown, 2004).

Response styles may have contributed to differences in the results. We attempted to deal with potential response style differences by ignoring the gradations within the scale and analyzing between-group endorsement and rejection dichotomously using appropriate non-parametric tests. The results of these tests generally matched the results of one-way ANOVAs. Moreover, standard deviations were not terribly different among the samples for any item or composite item. Together, this suggests that response style effects were not operative and that the results obtained are valid. Further studies using convergent methods, and more precisely matched samples, should be undertaken.

Finally, it should be noted that we did not measure individual level personality variables such as self-esteem, which is known to be associated with attributional thinking (Brown & Dutton, 1995) and persistence after failure (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Di Paula & Campbell, 2002), at least in North America, if not necessarily Japan (Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, & Matsumoto, 2001). It has been argued that students’ feelings and beliefs about themselves are important determinants of academic success (see Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper 2004, for a review). Specifically, it has been observed that a “self-serving” bias (success attributed internally, failure attributed externally) is related to persistence, which, judiciously

applied, is a requisite for success in virtually any field of human endeavor, including even those, such as gambling, in which random factors are deliberately designed in (Jake Jacobs III, personal communication)<sup>3</sup>. At least this seems to be true in North America. Evidence concerning the motivational efficacy of self-serving biases in other cultures is less clear. If success is rewarding and rewards are more effective than punishments (MacWhinney, 1995), then what are we to make of the findings that Japanese students persist longer after failure than success? (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Clearly, more work remains to be done. While we did assess certain clearly relevant student beliefs, we did not look at outcomes. Therefore, the connection between student attributional beliefs and achievement outcomes in Japan, China, and Turkey must remain, for the time being, speculative. Further studies using convergent methods, and more precisely matched samples, should be undertaken.

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### **Footnotes**

1. Copies of the original Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish versions of the questionnaires are available upon request from the authors.
2. These scores represent "either-or" endorsements of the items in question. There is no theoretical reason to expect these scores to correlate highly.
3. Mr. Jacobs is a professional gambler, author, and lecturer, specializing in backgammon.

**TABLES**

Table 1  
*Causes of Achievement Outcomes among Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish Students.*

	Japan		China		Turkey	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Success						
Effort	4.69 ****	1.16	4.07 ***	1.34	4.39 ****	1.17
Ability	3.96 ****	0.88	3.97 ***	1.038	4.69 ****	0.85
Luck	3.73 *	0.98	2.39 ****	1.13	2.59 ****	1.23
Task	3.20 **	1.06	2.49 ****	1.22	2.67 ****	1.12
Internal	8.65 ****	1.69	8.04 ****	1.78	9.08 ****	1.46
External	6.93 <i>ns</i>	1.68	4.89 ****	1.85	5.26 ****	2.02
Failure						
Effort	4.52 ****	0.89	4.24 ****	1.36	4.67 ****	1.01
Ability	3.79 **	1.06	2.62 ****	1.32	2.85 ***	1.44
Luck	3.17 **	0.99	2.70 ****	1.26	2.59 ****	1.16
Task	2.81 ****	0.10	3.49 <i>ns</i>	1.41	3.56 <i>ns</i>	1.26
Internal	8.31 ****	1.37	6.86 <i>ns</i>	1.84	7.52 **	1.49
External	5.98 ****	1.58	6.20 **	2.08	6.15 ***	1.86

*Note.* Single-sample *t*-tests against scale midpoint (3.5), \*  $p = .05$ , \*\*  $p = .01$ , \*\*\*  $p = .001$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < .0001$ . Japan  $n = 94$ , China  $n = 71$ , Turkey  $n = 61$ .

Table 2. Ratio of Internal vs. External Attributions for Success and for Failure.

	Japanese ( $On=188$ )		Chinese ( $On=71$ )		Turks ( $On=61$ )	
	Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
Success	154	103	93	24	106	31
	82%	55%	65%	17%	87%	25%
Failure	149	64	71	49	73	54
	79%	34%	50%	34%	60%	44%

