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Cross cultural analysis of personal traits a global prospective

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Abstract

At present time we live in the era of global village where, the cultural dynamics affects the dissension making strategies of the corporates and the government. These dynamics are the byproduct of the cultural traits which are inherited by the people of a particular country or a geographic region. Hence the researchers in this paper try to establish a real-time relationship between the personal traits and associated culture of that country. This research is a descriptive study of two factor analysis theory based on secondary data availed from Geert Hofstede dimensions of national culture. Inspired by him the authors in this paper has considered two most important dimensions taken are as follows.

(a) Shared values, which is analyzed under two cultural traits i.e. Masculinity as strong cultural value for Work and Feminine as Weak cultural value for work. And
(b) Shared Goals, which is also analyzed under two cultural traits i.e. Group goal as hard culture and Individual goals as Soft culture.

The analysis is presented in form of multivariate Scattered Plot Matrix on X and Y axis, which divides all the countries in four distinct groups as per different personal traits, these are as follows.

1. Believe in Group and strong motivation for work.
2. Believe in Group and weak motivation for work.
3. Believe in individualism and strong motivation for work.
4. Believe in individualism and weak motivation for work.

The total numbers of countries taken for research are fifty, and each of those is assigned one of the above groups as per the personal traits. This is a conceptual research; the statistical tools used to analyze the data are Multivariate Scattered Plot matrix. This paper try to give a basic knowledge on present cross cultural dynamic of different countries, which may facilitate the Government, corporate and others to evaluate their strategies in specific to traits.

Keywords: Geert Hofstede, Shared Values, Traits, Masculinity, Feminine, Share Goals, Hard Culture, Soft Culture, Strong Culture, Weak Culture, Motivation, Scattered Plot Matrix

1. Introduction

Today's business environment is increasingly multicultural. Successful organizations of any size often work with people and firms from other parts of the world, often with very different cultures. Culture has been defined in many ways, but it is principally viewed as the fundamental system of meanings shared by members of a specific society. That system of meanings is specific to a society and learned by its members over time. Different cultures will emphasize different values; what is important to one culture at one time may not be important to another culture or even to the first culture at some time in the future. These values may affect both the role institutions assume within society and what society expects of those institutions. Personal traits are influencing and influenced by the culture and culture varies from time to time, person to person and situation to situation. Along with the above understanding the culture differs geographically and demographically. Speaking about geographical identification of culture, it is broadly defined as per the average personal traits of individuals in that geographical unit. Hence we can understand that, as different countries are geographically divided so the culture along with its traits varies to a large extent. In our study we are going to elaborate how the personal traits of the average individual give the country a separate identity on cultural background. The necessity of making this research paper is that, no single country is identical on its cultural traits with others.

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Hence there cannot be a single or solo strategy by the Government or Corporate while they go for a multi-country operation of business. This in turn says that the cross cultural analysis is highly essential while making a national strategy in international forum.

2. Objective of the study

2.1 Primary objectives

To understand the value system of individuals and group towards the organizational goals

To establish a relationship between individual values and group values with organizational goals

To create a matrix table as per above traits and assign a symbol to each country.

2.2 The secondary objectives

To understand, what are the hard and soft goals for an individual and group?

To understand, what are the strong and weak values for an individual and group?

To understand and explain the components of matrix table in brief.

2.3 Theoretical frame work

In the theoretical literature review, various key terms, issues and concepts are dealt with and explained.

2.4 Definition of organizational culture

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and as conditioning elements of future action. (Kroeber and Kluckhohn -1952)

Culture is, "The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. It is the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a human group's response to its environment." (Hofstede -1980)

Hence we can define the corporate culture as "consists of norms, values and unwritten rules of conduct of an organization as well as management styles, priorities, belief and interpersonal behaviours that prevail. Together they create climate that influences how well people communicate, plan and make decisions"

Organizational culture as the shared attitude and perceptions in an organization that are based on a set of fundamental norms and values and help members understand the organization.

(Wagner III and Hollenbeck)

2.4 Types of organizational culture

1. Strong vs. Weak cultures

Organisational culture can be labeled as strong or weak based on sharedness of the core values among organisational members and the degree of commitment the members have to these core values.

The higher the sharedness and commitment to the core values, the stronger the culture, increases the possibility of behaviour consistency amongst its members for performance and productivity. While weaker the sharedness and commitment to the core values, the weaker the culture,

which reduces the possibility of behaviour consistency amongst its members for performance and productivity.

Strong Culture exists when an organization's core values are both intensely held and widely shared. The greater the number of members who accept the core values and the greater their commitment to these values, the stronger the culture is [2].

A strong culture creates an internal climate of high behavioral control and builds cohesiveness, loyalty, and organizational commitment.

In this case of Weak Culture, the organization's core values are not widely held or intensely felt. These cultures have little impact on member behavior.

A weak culture opens avenues for each one of the members showing concerns unique to them and Strong cultures have a greater impact on employee behavior and are more directly related to reduce turnover [3].

2.6 Soft vs. hard culture

Soft work culture can emerge in an organisation where the organisation pursues multiple and conflicting goals. In a soft culture the employees choose to pursue a few objectives which serve personal or sectional interests. A typical example of soft culture can be found in a number of public sector organisations in India where the management feels constrained to take action against employees to maintain high productivity. The culture is welfare oriented; people are held accountable for their mistakes but are not rewarded for good performance. Consequently, the employees consider work to be less important than personal and social obligations. Sinha (1990) has presented a case study of a public sector fertilizer company which was established in an industrially backward rural area to promote employment generation and industrial activity. Under pressure from local communities and the government, the company succumbed to overstaffing, converting mechanized operations into manual operations, payment of overtime, and poor discipline. This resulted in huge financial losses (up to 60 percent of the capital) to the company [4].

2.7 Personality traits

1. Geert Hofstede

Cultures vary in their underlying patterns of values and attitudes [5]. The way people think about such matters as achievement, wealth and material gain, risk and change, may influence how they approach work and their relationships with organizations.

Hofstede (1980, 1991), in order to find the common dimensions of culture across the countries, gathered data from surveys with 116,000 respondents working from IBM from more than 70 countries around the world [6].

The framework developed by Geert Hofstede offers one approach for understanding how value differences across national cultures can influence human behavior at work. The five dimensions of national culture in his framework can be described as follows [7].

Power distance is the willingness of a culture to accept status and power differences among its members.

Uncertainty avoidance is the cultural tendency to be uncomfortable with uncertainty and risk in everyday life.

Individualism vs. Collectivism is the tendency of a culture's members to emphasize individual self-interests or group relationships. It is the tendency of a culture to emphasize individual versus group interests. It reflects the degree to which people are likely to prefer working as individuals or

working together in groups. The United States is a highly individualistic culture, whereas Mexico is a more highly collectivist one.

Masculinity vs. Femininity is the degree to which a society values assertiveness or relationships.

It is the tendency of a culture to value stereotypical masculine or feminine traits. It reflects the degree to which organizations emphasize competition and assertiveness versus interpersonal sensitivity and concerns for relationships.

This somewhat unfortunately-named category considers the differences in decision-making style

Hofstede linked what he called a “masculine” approach to a hard-edged, fact-based and aggressive style decision-making. By contrast, “feminine” decision-making involved a much greater degree of consultation and intuitive analysis [8].

Japan is considered a very masculine culture, whereas Thailand is considered a more feminine culture.

The first four dimensions in Hofstede’s framework were identified in an extensive study of thousands of employees

of a multinational corporation operating in more than 40 countries [9].

The fifth dimension of long-term/short-term orientation was added from research conducted by cross-cultural psychologist Michael Bond and his colleagues using the Chinese Values Survey they developed [10].

3. Research methodology

This research paper used a descriptive analysis of different personal traits which are useful to construct a matrix table. The matrix is a conceptual design of based on two major traits i.e. Value oriented traits and Goal oriented traits as the two dimensions. Further these traits are divided in to two sub groups on their excess and deficiencies. The interaction among these two components and further sub components gives four different combinations, which gives a basic concept to classify all the countries in four basis types. The detailed structure of the matrix is given below.

3.1 F-M-C-G matrix

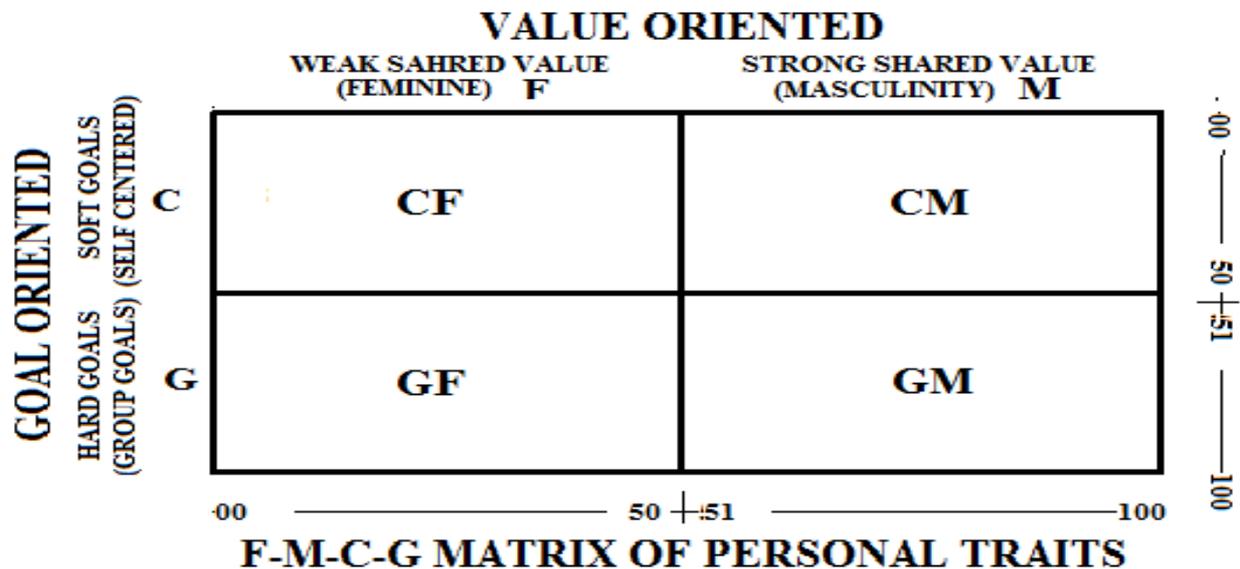


Fig 1

The matrix given in the above figure1, is named as F-M-C-G matrix, the major components of the above matrix are based on the major personal traits which guides an individual how to behave in a particular situation. The basic components of this model are based on two types of traits. These are

- (a) Value oriented traits and
- (b) Goal oriented traits.

These are further divided in to two sub groups as per the extreme and excess.

The value oriented traits are further divided in to

- (I) Feminine, expressed as “F” with weak shared values.
- (II) Masculinity expressed as “M” with strong shared values

Also the Goal oriented traits are divided in to

- (I) Centered (self) goal, expressed as “C” with soft goals
- (II) Group goal, expressed as “G” with hard goals.

F: Feminine is a Weak shared value culture where there is a weak alignment with organisational values and control must be exercised though extensive procedures and bureaucracy.

M: Masculinity is a Strong shared value culture where there is a strong alignment with organisational values. Strong

Culture is said to exist where staff respond to Stimulus because of their strong alignment to organisational values. I.e. Firms operate like a very well oiled machine.

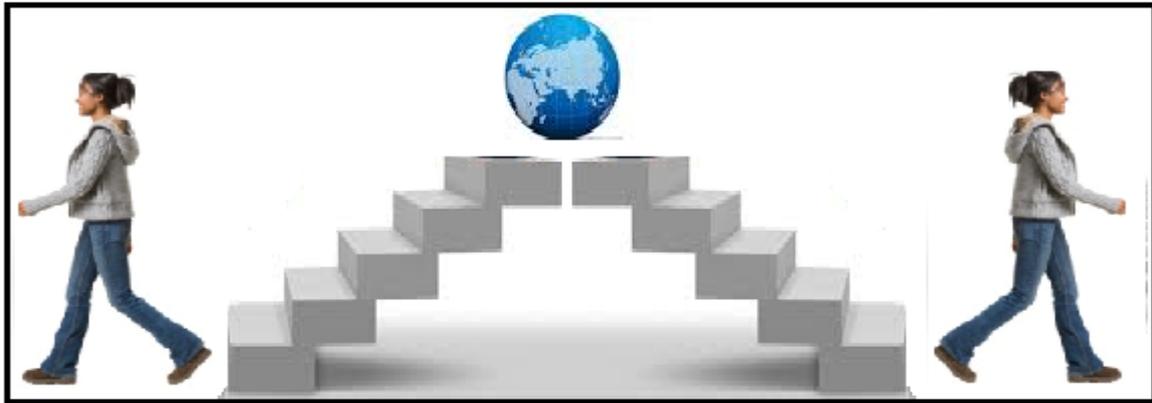
C: Centered (Self/Individual) oriented goal is a Soft goal culture where the employees pursue their own personal goals and give less importance to the organisational goals.

G: Group oriented goal is a Hard goal culture where the employees consider more on Group goal than of their own goals.

The score of FMCG matrix lies between zero (00) to hundred (100), where the soft goals and weak values lies between zero (00) to fifty (50). Beyond fifty (50) up to hundred (100) it is the range for hard goals and strong values.

The above traits give four different types of combinations, which give a specific feature to each group. These are as follows.

- a. **CF** (self-Centered and feminine): it is the cultural trait where the people believe neither in group goals nor in strong shared value. They are self-centered with weak shared cultural value.

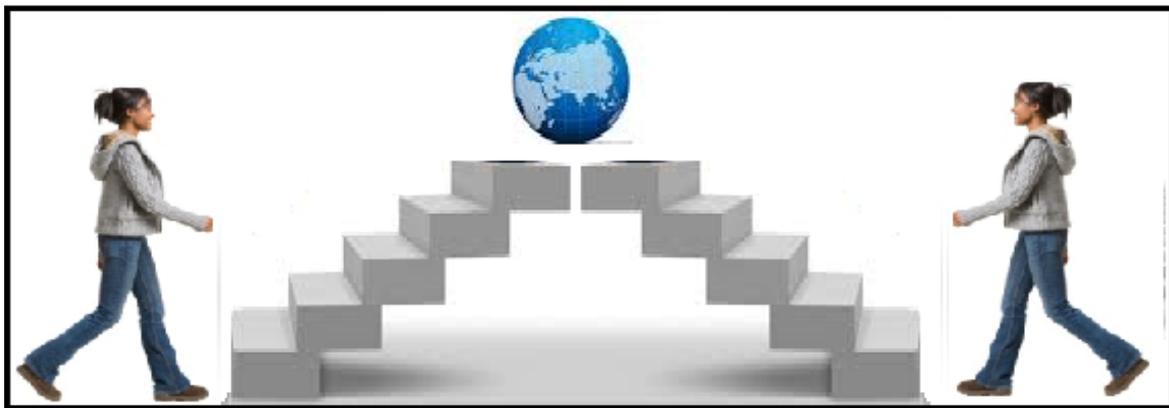


CF (self Centered and Feminine)

Fig 2

In this situation individuals are not interested in organization goals.
The score of both the traits lies below the level of fifty on both the parameters of value orientation and goal orientation.

b. **CM (self-Centered and Masculinity)**: it is the cultural trait where the people don't believe in group goals but believe in strong shared Organizational value. Hence they feel individually they must achieve the desired organizational goal.



C M (self Centered and Masculinity)

Fig 3

This is the situation may lead to a situation of interpersonal conflict, if they are not properly managed.

The score of group goal lies below fifty but the score of Masculinity remain higher than fifty one.

c. **GF (Group Goal oriented and Feminine)**: it is the cultural trait where the people believe in group goals

but they don't believe in strong shared Organizational value. Hence they feel safe in remaining in group and perform as a group but the goals are not concentrated to organizational value system, rather to their individual goals.

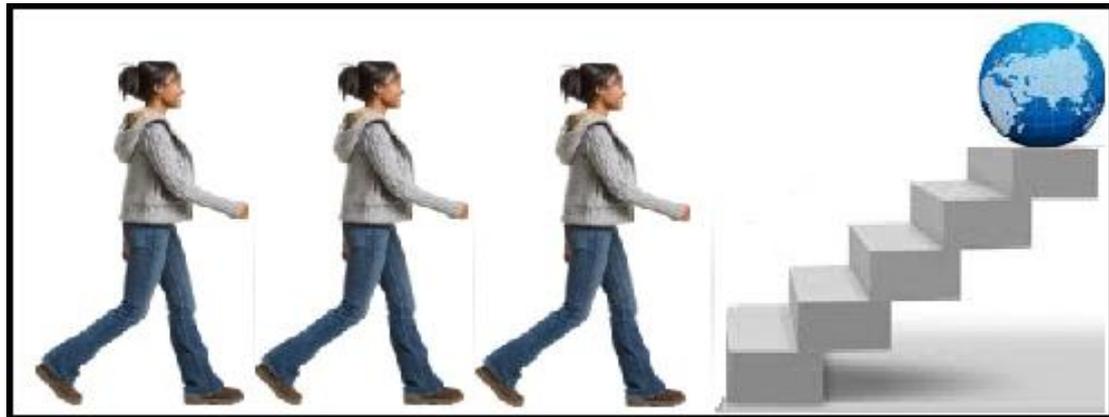


GF (GROUP GOAL ORIENTED AND FEMININE)

Fig 4

This is the situation where they form unions to protect their own livelihood, this may lead to arise a situation of conflict of interest between personal and professional interest. The score of group goal lies above fifty one but the score of Masculinity remain lower than fifty.

d. **GM (Group Goal oriented and Masculinity):** it is the cultural trait where the people believe both in group goals and also in strong organizational shared value. They are highly organized and desire to achieve and align with organizational values.



GM (GROUP GOAL ORIENTED AND MASCULINITY)

Fig 5

In this situation the whole group tries to achieve the organizational objective working with each other. The score of both the traits remain above the level of fifty one on both the parameters of value orientation and goal orientation.

3.2 Implication of the study

As per the design of the FMCG matrix, now we can evaluate the countries as per the different traits. As per the score we can assign a status to the country. Once we came to know across the status of country as per the FMCG matrix, it will enable a government or corporate strategy to be made or modified. Because each country has its own dynamics we can understand the basic nature of traits possessed by the average people of that country and accordingly a cautious decision can be taken.

To make the concept more clear we can take an example citing the individualism vs. collectivism and the masculinity vs. femininity.

Table 1

	Individualism v Collectivism	Masculinity v Femininity
Australia	90	61
China	20	66
UK	89	66
India	48	56
South Korea	18	39
Singapore	20	48
U.S.A.	91	62

In the above data take the example of Australia, this carries value of Individualism 90 and Masculinity 61. Putting the

value on FMCG table we find the status of the country as CM category. This says that, individually every individual carries a strong affinity and alignment to follow the organizational values. But the group cohesiveness is difficult to be created or maintained.

- China belongs to the group of GM
- UK, belongs to the group of CM
- India belongs to the group of GM of low standard.
- South Korea carries GF
- Singapore carries GF
- USA carries CM

4. Conclusion

Its 3 am I wl write tomorrow

4.1 Scope for further research

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