



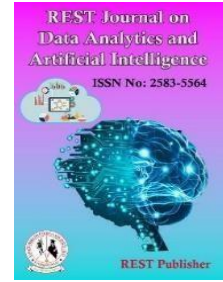
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Cultural Dimensions & Impact On Performance Management

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Abstract: Culture plays a vital role in any organization especially in multinational and international companies which has expat employees. It is important to learn the importance and impact of culture on performance management in organizations. Thus the present study aims at analyzing the impact of culture and cultural dimensions on performance management in UAE organizations. Objectives of the study include 1) understand how cultural dimensions' impact performance 2) analyze various cultural dimensions and performance management issues in organizations 3) analyze the cultural challenges for performance management issues in UAE and finally 4) put forward few recommendations to overcome the impact of cultural dimensions over performance management in UAE. This study is based on the review of literature on aspects such as culture and cultural dimensions, performance management and finally impact of cultural dimensions on performance management from past to present. Analysis, conclusion and recommendations are drawn out based on the review and findings of literature review. After reviewing the literature and referring various aspects of performance management and impact of cultural dimensions it is identified that in UAE most of the organizations show high power distance where in subordinates are treated in a low level and there is a large gap between senior and low level management, high level of inequality prevails, senior management separate themselves from the rest, there is low individualism and high uncertainty avoidance that focuses on strict rules, laws, policies, regulations that needs to be implemented, women are limited to rights and Islamic religion could be the major reason for this and finally there is a large score for long term orientation where in organizations and individuals as well give more importance to values, beliefs and social obligations.

Keywords: Culture, cultural dimensions, organization culture, performance management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In every culture in the world the facts like authority, bureaucracy, creativity and accountability etc are dealt in different ways. Internal and external environments of the organization influence in managing human resources in organizations require understanding of the influence of both internal and external environments of organization. In the internal environment it is the organization culture is basis and in the external environment, ownership is one of the major issues. For multinational companies with base in overseas countries but having presence in UAE, culture of the country of shareholders will be linked to the culture of UAE as the top management and the corporate policies of the owner country will have to linked to branch office country. In similar way there will be difference in nature of industry scenario, available resources and market characteristics in country of origin and the different branches of the corporate entity. Social cultural environment which includes power, paternalism and distance also impact the human resources policies. It is also fact that internationalization will lead to common culture globally which will make the lives of the managers much simpler. Globalization integrates the world's economies and provides number of ways to conduct business activities as technology narrows borders (Pleissir, 2009).

Management deals with reality that is man-made. People build organizations according to their values, and societies are composed of institutions and organizations that reflect the dominant values within their culture (Hofstede, 1984). Management is a coordinated efforts of different people (could be senior, middle level or other knowledge workers)

on the way which uses available economical and technical resources so as to obtain the desired results or outcomes. Further no management activity could be culture free (Hofstede, 1984). It is the people (management) who are critical for organization and who make the critical decisions and stand by or the success and failure of the company. Effectiveness of the organization lies in the effective management, development, motivation, involvement, use of available resources, contribution and finally the management willingness to put themselves into organizational strategies and objectives (Patterson et. al, 1997).

Performance management is defined as creating context for - and measures of- performance. Performance is defined as the potential for future successful implementation of actions in order to reach the objectives and targets (Lebas, 1995). Next talking about performance it could be related to efficiency, effectiveness, resistance, outcomes and so on. Performance management is generally based on the past achievements further focusing on the future and management creating and shaping the future of the organization. Generally in any organization performance management is based on six main steps as depicted in the picture which clearly states the major responsibilities that needs to be taken up by the management to perform their best (Lebas, 1995).

Considering cultural especially in the international context, it has become a hot topic as here globalization, team working and diversity plays a major role in organizations. International organizations should identify the developing cultural challenges and develop practices so as to meet the global competitiveness, flexibility, and learning capabilities so as to maintain a balance where in international organizations have to build up cultural sensitivity and the capability to manage performance (Higgs, 1996). It is important for organizations to identify and understand the framework for analyzing the cultural differences. Stating the impact of culture and cultural dimensions on performance management Jaegar & Kanungo (1990) states that management attitude and climate of belief is maintained and affected by power distance (in other words status quo), low uncertainty avoidance (distrust in eco system), high individualism (more reliance on bureaucratic practices) which leads to negative impact on performance management. Many cultural constraints become obstacles for effective implementation of performance management. Here building cultural values and beliefs are important as they create potential and facilitate smooth process of performance management.

People are the most valuable resource of an organization, and that the management of people makes a difference to company performance (Patterson, West, Lawthom and Nickell, 1997). Many studies have been brought up to study the effectiveness of people management and business performance, but very few studies were conducted on the cultural impact on performance management. Every nation has a varying effect of cultural dimensions in organizations and the employees working over there. It is important to consider the cultural dimensions before creating strategies and objectives in organizations as this helps the management in effective performance (Patterson et. al., 1997).

Thus this research tries to focus on this issue and studies the impact of culture and cultural dimensions on performance management especially in UAE organizations. This research intends to bring about awareness in the readers and to make them learn the importance of focusing on cultural dimensions. This research study is completely based on the review of literature that focuses on analysis of various researches conducted on performance management and impact of culture and cultural dimension on managing performance in organizations from past to present. The following sections discuss and the views, analysis and results of various researches.

2. CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Zeynep Aycan et.al (2000) defines culture as common patterns of beliefs, assumptions, values and norms of behavior of human groups (represented by Societies, institutions and organizations” As cited by Lu, Lung-Tan, Lee & Yuan-Ho (2005) culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (Hofstede, 1980) Organizational culture varies from industry to industry and forms country to country. It shows its different characteristics like diversity in workforce. It can create both positive and negative effect on the staff and the workplace. In fact culture determines the survival of an organization over the long term. Cultures can be a liability to an organization if it creates barriers to change, create barriers to diversity or barriers to mergers and acquisitions (Robbins, 2009).

Understanding organizational culture can help you to understand why change does not take place, or why a project fails. It will also help you to determine where to strive to make changes to the culture. Internationalization and

globalization has led to tremendous changes making business environments more complex. Groeschl (2003) states that it is important for organizations to look for appropriate and effective organizational processes and further focus on managing performance based on the cultural dimensions. Studies on comparative management and cross cultural aspects show that management approaches and perceptions differ with culture. Next talking about the studies done by theorists and practitioners past two decades it is seen that they have been analyzing and discussing the appraisal process as an important tool that helps in managing people and performance in organizations (Groeschl, 2003)

The cultural framework provided by Hofstede's has been overall accepted as unit for measuring differences among nations (Triandis, 1982). It is also fact that number of studies to investigate the effect of culture on human resource polices are limited. The cultural dimensions have been grouped into two categories, namely relations between people and motivational orientations (Hofstede, 2000).

Individualism, Versus Collectivism: This parameter is measured by an index which reveals the degree to which individuals look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually around the family. In individualism the ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after himself and her immediate family. Collectivism stands for a society which are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 2002, p 225). Individualism is measured by Individualism Index (IDV) and it is observed that most developed countries have highest index as compared to developing countries. Societies do face uncertainty of living. According to the theory suggested by Hofstede there are three dimensions: masculinity versus femininity, amount of uncertainty avoidance, and power distance.

Masculinity Versus Femininity: issue comes on surface due to the emotional differences between two genders. Masculinity Index (MAS), differ with each country based on high gender roles, distinction at work. It has been found to be highest in Japan.

Uncertainty Avoidance: This aspect measures how much the culture has made its members feel comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. In the study by Hofstede's, there is mention of score on Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) (Hofstede, 1991, p. 113)

Power Distance: This is another index in which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The power distance is measured in a Power Distance Index (PDI) (Hofstede, 1991, p. 26). The values and attitudes found at the national level contrast "low-PDI countries" with "high-PDI countries", with some countries placed in between. High PDI countries include Malaysia, Guatemala, Panama, Mexico, and East Africa. Low PDI countries include the US, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark (Hofstede, 2000). In addition to the above, Hofstede introduced the fifth dimension which is Long term orientation which is mostly related to individualism dimension (Lu, Lung-Tan, Lee & Yuan Ho, 2005).

Hostfede (1984) states that international managers need to understand deeply the ranges of culture determined value system which exist between the nations and this should be used to transfer in other words share knowledge of management ideas from one nation to another. Here it is important for us to learn about the cultural variables that directly or indirectly affect the performance management in an organization. Zeynep Aycan et.al., (2000) states that there are three different levels where in the cultural variables effect the human resource management practices. Where in at the first level organizations internal work culture is seen as a way that shares managerial beliefs and assumptions which relate to tasks and employees. At the second level task driven assumptions are driven by the organizational characteristics such as industry, ownership status, availability of resources, market competition. Finally at the third level employee related assumptions are driven by socio cultural characteristics.

Thus it can be said that the organizational work culture (internal work culture) refers to shared managerial beliefs and assumptions (Zeynep Aycan, Rabindra Kanungo, Manuel Mendonca, Kaicheng Yu, Jurgen Deller, Gunter Stahl and Anwar Kurshid, 2000) which shows a major impact on organizational and societal level cultures. For the corporate operating in more than one country the human resources department job includes work involving the management of staff in a variety of different cultural settings, decisions on the ideal mix of local expatriate staff and the pay and remuneration of those working in a foreign location (Woods, 2001). There is different view by Watson (1997), who has a unique approach to employment management including the cultural, structural and personnel techniques.

Cultural diversity is a reality in multinational companies and it is the responsibility of line management to get the support of their employees, their understanding and participation according to Du Plessis, Beaver and Nel (2006).

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

According to Lu, Lung-Tan, Lee & Yuan-Ho (2005) performance management included management style of managing things within the organization. This mainly included style of supervision – this shows the different types of relationship between the superior and their subordinates in the organization. It is seen that supervision styles related to power distance and individualism. Next decision making tactics – this relates the various activities that lead to accomplishment and outcomes which is influenced by high centralization and formal authority at senior most levels. Next comes the differentiated patterns of communication – this refers the various types of flow of information within the organization and between the departments. This also focuses on the barriers of information flow. This is influenced by high power distance, low individualism and high masculinity dimensions. Next mechanism of controlling – this refers to the various operations conducted in the organization and checks for the results obtained by meeting employees. Next, paternalistic orientations – this refers to the degree of supervision and their concerns towards the employees especially in non work related issues (employee family life and social support). Finally, maintaining relations within the departments (interdepartmental) - as said this clearly states the relationships between the departments in the organization. This is highly influenced by power distance and high individualism (Lu, Lung-Tan, Lee & Yuan-Ho, 2005).

4. CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The practices and processes of human resource management can be linked to other countries but it is a difficult process and can lead to difference in perception and becomes a debateable issue. This aspect is significant to the MNC's as foreign direct investments (FDI) which is key feature of any economy mainly is routed through opening of establishments or joint ventures etc. There are legal bindings to recruit local staff and also to follow local culture to large extent. Wherever, there is violation, it is dealt with penalty. Performance Management is a strategic HRM process and MNC's use this tool to improve individual, subsidiary unit and corporate performance linked to company's strategy. The research studies are limited regarding the effects of performance management of the employees in MNC subsidiaries where the majority of the work force is of host-country nationality, and where the host-country's culture may differ substantially from that of the MNC's home country. This issue is not so simple as there can be number of other aspects like attitude problem of people sitting at higher posts in owner countries with the country of and especially of non managerial employees in MNC subsidiaries (Malcolm G Patterson, Michael A West, Rebecca Lawthom and Stephen Nickell, 1997). In such circumstances, employees with negative attitudes do not perform to full extent, at times they will cause disruptions in operations which can jeopardize the viability of the organization. In their hypothesis Zeynep Aycan et.al., (2000), states that the managers from India, China, Pakistan, Russia, Romania are considered to be on the top which means there is wide range of delegation of power difference between hierarchy levels. Managers from Canada and USA are at middle level. It is sort of paternalistic relationship wherein the seniority and gender is given high importance. There is no cross cultural study regarding paternalism. This is second type of cultural dimension. There is third cultural dimension of loyalty towards community. It refers to the extent up to which the people are loyal to their communities are compelled to fulfil their commitments. The last socio cultural dimension was fatalism which means whatever happen must happen.

Zeynep Aycan et.al., (2000), state that most of the studies in this context relates to the industrial and organisational psychology (I/O) within one cultural context. In view of the above the cross cultural impact is not compared by most of the studies. Therefore, a better understanding of how cultural dimensions may explain effectiveness of HRM practices differently in other cultures. The strong performance management is critical to meet challenges, promote innovation and develop top performing teams and will lead to culture of performance. A strong culture of performance cultivates the vision of family belonging in the company. This vision will lead to teams and departments actively seeking proactive ways to drive value to the business and promote new levels of cooperation. Performance management is the focal point to enhance accountability and building high performance culture. However, the views of some of the organizations differ and they do not agree that it adds value to the organization.

Zeynep Aycan et al., (2000), is of the view that a strong performance management is critical to meet challenges, promote innovation and develop top performing teams and will lead to culture of performance. A strong culture of performance cultivates the vision of family belonging in the company. This vision will lead to teams and departments actively seeking proactive ways to drive value to the business and promote new levels of cooperation. Performance management is the focal point to enhance accountability and building high performance culture. However, the views of some of the organizations differ and they do not agree that it adds to value to the organization. The other key point is the dimension of internal work culture in relation to socio cultural environment. There are seven hypotheses in this study which are related to the Model of Cultural Fit. The internal work culture environment includes prevailing managerial assumptions about flexibility. The basis of assumptions in this case is that the managers feel that employees can improve their skills based on the training and being provided with developmental opportunities. Amongst the seven hypotheses one is proactively which denote the extent to which the employees take proactive interest in learning. They are expected to be loyal. Under the second hypotheses in this case is the responsibility seeking. Under this the managers assume the extent up to which the employees can take up the responsibility. Discussing about the performance Groeschl (2003), focuses on the process of appraisals in organizations and states that appraisal process helps in identifying and developing people and their performance levels and at the same time the purpose of appraisal process in the cultural context could impose implications where in the employee performance can be interpreted or valued in a different way due to different cultures, values and belief systems which is sometimes considered as the success of the organization. In his paper "Cultural Implications for the Appraisal Process", Groeschl (2003; pg.69) states that "information about behaviour" might be interpreted differently by the individual collecting and evaluating them, due to different value and belief systems of, for example, what is right/wrong, or good and bad behaviour". This could end up in culture related implications which form the concept and purpose of appraisal process in organizations which could be interpreted and valued differently due to cultural differences (Groeschl, 2003).

5. REVIEW ANALYSIS

After reviewing the literature and referring the various aspects of performance management and impact of cultural dimensions the following analysis has been made in focus of performance management and impact of cultural dimensions in UAE organizations. Primarily this research intends to discuss the impact of Hofstede cultural dimensions on UAE management.

- Power distance (distribution of power) – considering the power distance dimension it is seen that there is high power distance that led to high decision making powers, delegation of work to subordinates, creates more gap between management and employees. In UAE most of the organizations show high power distance where in subordinates are treated in a low level and there is a large gap between the senior management and the low level management, high level of inequality prevails, senior management separate themselves from the rest (according to Hofstede, PDI is 80)
- Individualism/ Collectivism – considering the individualism that reflects to the individual values, self determination that is opposed by collective opinions and the degree to which individuals integrate in groups, it is seen that in UAE there is low individualism (according to Hofstede, IDV is 38)
- Uncertainty avoidance – considering the dimension of uncertainty avoidance that relates to the tolerance of uncertainties and the ambiguity, unstructured to structured management, performance, safety measures etc., in UAE it is seen that there is high uncertainty avoidance that focuses on strict rules, laws, policies, regulations that needs to be implemented (according to Hofstede, UAI is 68)
- Masculinity – next talking about the masculinity which refers to the distribution of roles and work between the genders. UAE scores 52 (MAS) that indicates the UAE women are limited to rights and Islamic religion could be the major reason for this.
- Long term orientation – this refers to the values, beliefs, social obligations associated with long term or either short term, in UAE there is a large score for long term orientation where in organizations and individuals as well give more importance to values, beliefs and social obligations. Many rules and regulations are put to follow the social condition in the nation.

Thus looking at the analysis on Hofstede cultural dimension in UAE, it can be said that the combination of high levels of power distance and uncertainty avoidance led to high rule oriented laws, regulations, policies, control of policies and rules so as to reduce uncertainties. This helps the organization to have effective performance management. Next

considering the low and medium levels of individualism and masculinity the cultural constructs could be the major reason for this. High masculinity could lead to low interference of women in organization. Regarding performance management, in UAE management style is through managing things within the organization that includes style of supervision which shows different types of relationship between the superior and their subordinates in the organization. It is seen that supervision style is related to power distance and individualism. Next talking about decision making tactics in UAE organization that relates to various activities in organization led to accomplishment and outcomes that are influenced by high centralization and formal authority at senior most levels (as discussed before high power distance).

In reference to differentiated patterns of communication that refers to various types of flow of information within the organization and between the departments. In UAE organization there are high levels of barriers of information flow and this is influenced by high power distance, low individualism and high masculinity dimensions. Next considering the mechanism of controlling that refers to the various operations conducted in the organization and checks for the results obtained by meeting employees, it is seen that in UAE organizations there is high levels of controlling by superiors over subordinates. And considering the paternalistic orientations that refers to the degree of supervision and their concerns towards the employees especially in non work related issues (employee family life and social support) in UAE organizations it is seen that there exists low level of supervision. Management is not concerned of the employee personal or social life. Finally, maintaining relations within the departments (interdepartmental) clearly states the relationships between the departments in the organization which is highly influenced by power distance and high individualism.

Thus cultural dimensions have shown their impact on performance management in UAE also. The MNC's that have parent company in other than UAE will have top executives from the parent country, their performance will depend upon the extent to which they are knowledgeable and imparted training regarding the UAE culture. The advantage is observed as knowledge of two cultures removes hidden barriers of cultural misunderstanding and development of better relationships. This can prove to be disadvantageous as unless the expatriates are properly trained they will be unable to show performance and impacts the human resources and company as a whole. In addition to this there is usage of time and money for multicultural ventures. In UAE, the multinationals are not free from cultural shocks as the UAE society culture is unlike western society. The success of expatriates is enhanced by minimising the cultural shocks. It is fact that ability of local employees gives them more advantage as compared to expatriates as locals are adapted to the culture much better than the expatriates. Success in the UAE is defined by how much one contributes to the society, either serving in government or the private sector or both. It is assumed that in the multicultural global business environment such as UAE managers face the issue of cultural differences. This also led to interference with management practices.

6. CONCLUSION

The culture is the best way in which group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas. The culture is like book with each page giving sequence of the next page. Inter culture communication is essential for exchange of ideas and emotions. It has been observed that either the neutral or expressive cultures have problem in doing business with each other. As per records in UAE there are 76% Muslims, 15% Christians and 9% Hindus and others. Arabs are known for their informal, relaxed behaviour, good manners and consideration of others. There is strong vertical hierarchy in most Emirates companies. Emirates people prefer to do business with those they know. Arabs by nature are trust worthy and they are not comfortable with low trust and as per records approximately 10% UAE nationals change their job due to this reason. HR policies are implemented with difficulty in case of MNC's as such companies try to implement global strategies. It is complex situation for corporate human resources department as the company is operating in different countries involved and also people with diverse national backgrounds. The studies done in regards to the HRM show that strategic factors influence international human resource management. The policies and procedures need to be shaped in such a way that it comply with culture of both the countries. The most important explanatory variable is subsidiary role and national culture of the country of origin. This carry significance as organizational capabilities of the subsidiary companies increase, the role of subsidiary employee in achievement of corporate objectives also increases. In UAE, there has been number of steps taken by Government to empower women as against previous times when the women were restricted to home makers. It is basically in culture of UAE and men will never shake hands unless the women offer the same. Though the prevailing laws show equality of women in all spheres of field but the empowering of women is still to go a long way in all segments of society. In very of the Islamic

countries in the world the culture may follow certain special rules because their knowledge of the world is limited. The leaders of a certain culture may suppress the people in order to remain in control.

Recommendations: In one of his lecture Hofstede advised the nations that the power distance need to be reduced and the relationship between management and employees to be strengthened. He said that the organisation structure should be that the decision making should not be centralised. Employee involvement will lead to better results. He has taken the IBM study in 70 countries and observed that economy and the culture impacts the power distance. He also emphasized that all employees to be treated as equal and the inequality should be removed. In the second dimension of uncertainty, he is of the opinion that unless risk is taken the flexibility and creativity is less. For the third dimension it is the individualism and collectivism, highly individualism value autonomy, personal success and personal goals, looking for themselves. These societies are having low level of transition and low level of social benefits. In collectivism, social acceptance of team work is highly valued. Masculinity and femininity: By masculinity he mentioned competitiveness and assertiveness. If these approached are applied in UAE, power distance is in existence. There is hierarchy system prevalent in most of the companies. The moderate opinion is suggested. UAE has parity between masculinity and femininity though it is in transition phase; it is suggested to take immediate steps. The collectivism is prevalent in UAE. This will add to the growth and benefit to the society and recommended to be continues. In the similar way for the dimension named as uncertainty, people in UAE will like to take low risk.

Culture needs to accept change in the social environment and structured management is need of the time. UAE is developing fast and there is number of expatriates to work for local as well as MNC's. Performance management can be made effective in the organization if there is need for the right system in place. Employees including managers and staff need to be imparted training to be aware of the importance of managing performance. Getting performance management right involves changing what people do, and how they do it and by developing the right culture. There are number of ways by which organization in UAE can improve the effectiveness of the performance management.

As per UAE culture people need sense of ownership and responsibility to take action for improvement. They also need directions in the opportunities for setting further directions and reviewing progress. There are chances that organization culture of culture of the country is not supporting and unless proper steps are not taken it can be prove to be risky for future progress. Such cultures may not be able to improve the performance management. Except for the rich families and educated society the UAE remains underdeveloped. Change in culture is restricted to a few professional associations and voluntary groups. There is limited social and political polarization in UAE. The UAE has strong reliance on foreign labor which is a major worry, because current projections forecast that the local national population will form only 2% of the total population by the year 2025 (based on statistics as developed by the Ministry of Education). Organizations in UAE need to realize that an important aspect of capitalizing on their business strategy is through its people. They have had to acquire new knowledge or skills, learn new methods of working, or simply gone without certain functionality for a while. Employers need to assess how much of this has occurred and begin to take appropriate measures to mitigate the risk of discontinuity.

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