

Why not everybody loves Hofstede? What are the alternative approaches to study of culture?

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Abstract

In these days the Hofstede's work on culture is most quoted in many publications. For scholars and practitioners knowing and having complete understanding of cross cultural dimensions, Hofstede's work plays an important and dynamic role. His observations and analysis gives the full understanding to the readers and as well as authors and scholars. Still such pioneering work faces much criticism by scholars. Some of the scholars appreciated his credible work. Some scholars quote his finding in their research and some ignore it. In our paper, this study concludes all the criticism on hofstede's work. Basically there are two parts of this paper; in first part we discuss the reason why hofstede's work faces criticism and in second part we recommend various other cultural dimensions, which we can use to understand the culture.

Research Findings

This paper tries to conclude all the dimensions and also suggest the model for understanding the national culture.

Key Words

Culture, National culture, Hofstede, cross cultural dimension.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, culture has lot of importance in business. For doing business globally, businessmen must have awareness about culture of different countries where they wants to operate. Each country or organization has its own culture, and to survive, the cultural understanding is most important factor. By keeping the importance of culture in mind, many researchers tried to find the cross cultural dimensions including Hofstede but they didn't succeed to provide a valuable guideline. Mostly the literature on cross cultural dimension is expressed in broad behavioral term and lack of specificity Michael and College, (1997 cited in Jones, 2007).

2. Literature Review

Different scholars have different definitions of culture. Culture is refer as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group from another (Hofstede, 1980).

“Mental programming refers as patterns of thinking and feeling and potential acting” (Hofstede, 1991). Culture includes dominant beliefs, attitude, collective activities, role models, myths, language, jargons, and dress of particular group or area. One acquired these values from birth and influenced by religion, family and many other sources.

Bond, (2002); Hofstede, (1997) cited in Jones, (2007) states that the huge research efforts of Hofstede started to recognize in 1980. It is the one of the most appreciated work of that time. For obtaining this research he worked with IBM staff over the years of 1967 to 1978. From that data, he identified four main dimensions, Power distance; Individualism/Collectivism; Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity/Femininity. These four dimensions became the basis of characterization of culture for each country. With Bond he identified the fifth dimension Confucian Dynamism or Long/Short term Orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Hofstede’s model is implemented in many business systems such as entrepreneurial behavior, training design, conflict resolution, leadership style and many others. Cavusgil and Das, (1997) cited in Jones, (2007) argues that Problems, which are associated with cross cultural research, are difficult to identify because cross cultural research isn’t an easy task. There are some additional factors which researchers must overcome while conducting cross cultural research. These factors are:

2.1.1 Definition problems

Some terms which are using in the research itself are broad terms like “culture” (Nasif, Al-Daeaj & Ebrahimi, 1991). As there are more than 164 definitions of single word culture (Olie, 1995).such terminologies when used in the questionnaire make it subject to interpretation.

2.1.2 Methodological Simplicity

Major problem in developing the questionnaire is the researcher’s background. Sometime a researcher belongs to only one discipline. Suppose a researcher is an economist then he or she define all the terminologies in the context of economics. (Nasif, 1991 cited in Jones, 2007) states that for developing a good questionnaire researcher must have the knowledge of different disciplines.

2.1.3 Equivalency

Equivalency has the four dimensions: functional, conceptual, instrument and measurement equivalency (Cavusgil & Das, 1997).In functional equivalence, researcher assumes that the functional role of anything in one country is the same as in another country. Conceptual equivalence refers as cultural utility of behaviors and attitudes. Researcher assumes that company loyalty can be perceived as same in different cultures (Cavusgil & Das, 1997). Instrument and measurement equivalence is related with the instrument used in the research. It isn’t necessary every culture behave in same manner to research instruments. Researcher should use unbiased and explicit instrument.

Language can also be a factor which cause problems in cross cultural researches. Researcher can overcome this factor by adopting multilingual panel or questionnaire and back-translation technique.

2.2 Hofstede’s findings

As a result of his research work, Hofstede identified four dimensions to characterize the cultural differences.

2.2.1 Power Distance (PD)

It refers as the degree to which unequal distribution of power is accepted. It can be determined by the hierarchal level in an organization and distance between social classes.

2.2.2 Individualism/Collectivism (IC)

It refers to the degree of social integration. It measure whether people prefer to work in group or alone.

2.2.3 Masculinity/Femininity (MF)

It refers to as a degree to masculine traits such as performance, authority and assertiveness which are prevailed or preferred over female traits like relationships, welfare. It measure whether masculine or feminine traits are prevailing in society.

2.2.4 Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)

It refers as a degree to which people avoid uncertainties or threatened by lack of structure and the extent to which they have control over their future.

2.3 Arguments against Hofstede

Some scholars criticized and some complemented on the Hofstede work on cultural dimensions. Like, for some of economists, the research work of Hofstede is highly controversial. Major issues which run against Hofstede's are:

2.3.1 Relevancy

Many researchers criticize that the survey is not a valid instrument to determine the cultural difference. In some cases the variables are more sensitive for one culture and not for other (Schwartz, 1999)

2.3.2 Cultural Homogeneity

In this criticism scholars said that the Hofstede's study based on individual assessment. He asses the individual and apply the findings on overall community (Dorfman & Howell 1988).

2.3.3 National Divisions

In fact culture is fragmented across groups and national boundaries. Researches show that it isn't necessary, culture is bounded by borders. So nations are not the valid unit of analysis (McSweeney, 2000).

2.3.4 Political Influences

It is criticized that the outcomes of Hofstede's research, especially Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance may have been sensitive to the time when survey was conducted (Sondergaard, 1994; Newman, 1996).

At the time of survey, Europe was disturbed by World War II so the uncertainty avoidance was high in those days.

2.3.5 One Company Approach

Research work of Hofstede was based on the data from one company. The criticism is that findings didn't provide valid information regarding culture of entire country (Graves, 1986; Olie, 1995). The finding of one company can't be implemented on overall culture to determine cultural dimensions.

2.3.6 Out-dated

Some researchers criticized that the research work is too old and can't be effectively implemented in the era of rapidly changing environment, convergence and globalization.

2.3.7 Too Few Dimensions

The other criticism is that four or five dimensions are not enough to determine the cultural differences. These dimensions don't provide complete information about culture.

2.3.8 Statistical integrity

Dorfman and Howell, (1988 cited in Jones, 2007) have found that in his analysis, Hofstede on occasion, used the same questionnaire item on more than one scale, and several have significant cross-loadings. In fact, when closely observed, the analysis comprises 32 questions with only 40 cases or subjects (40 data points corresponding to 40 countries). An analysis built on so few 'subjects' takes great advantage of

chance.

2.4 Criticism with respect to GLOBE

Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research program (GLOBE) is a large scale cross cultural research program based on data collected by 160 scholars and support staff of 3 administrators from 60 countries. The major objective is to rank the nations with respect to eight dimensions of culture. GLOBE tried to overcome the shortcomings of Hofstede research work.

GLOBE is a step to move further ahead from Hofstede's approach and to develop comprehensive, theoretically sound and verifiable cross cultural dimensions.

2.4.1 Action based research

Hofstede research isn't action based research. Action base researches involves fact finding, planning, action steps, evaluation, amendments and further plans based on amendments. Many of these steps were lacking in Hofstede work. To conduct effective cross cultural research there must be strong theory and good measurements. In the contrast, GLOBE suggested a theory, which's attributes defined that specific culture also predicts the leadership style and organizational practices in that culture. These attributes also define the economic competitiveness of nations (House, *et. al.*, 2004). GLOBE first identified the dimensions in general terms which were wanted to measure. Then design scales and statistical analysis to access the scales adequacy. Researchers call these constructs as a convergent-emergent construct (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). They are called convergent because people respond to dimension while focusing at single point. They are considering as emergent because people respond to the survey according to their cognition and personality.

2.4.2 Hofstede's research de-centered

Another criticism on Hofstede work is that his work is de-centered. He focused on one company that was not fulfilling the requirement of cultural research. Hofstede accepted that his work was de-centered and the fifth dimension for the Chinese culture is the proof of decentralization. The shortcoming of one company response is that the respondents respond according to company and their own needs and interest. IBM didn't include fifth dimension in its survey because they had not any interest in this dimension.

The study of GLOBE is more effective because this study consist of over 160 scholars from 62 cultures. GLOBE referred its study to country co-investigators (CCIs). After various discussion CCIs agreed upon the definition of leadership. In the next step, CCIs conducted interviews in their respective countries, to discuss the views about leadership. After working of six month on the finding of interviews, CCIs came up with the comprehensive dimensions of culture and leadership.

2.4.3 Distinguish values from practices

Culture is a broader term, its definition vary from person to person. Conventionally, culture is defined as collective programming of mind which distinguishes one person to another person. According to Hofstede, a cultural value includes rituals and symbol which manifested through the practices. Generally there are two assumptions. First, it is assume that measuring the individual's value is sufficient to define the values of overall culture. Second assumption is that the relationship between values and behavior of individual can be generalized to all member of culture. It is perceived that every member behave in same manner. Hofstede accept these assumptions in his work

GLOBE distinguishes the cultural values from practices. According to GLOBE, culture is defined as values, belief, norms and pattern of particular groups (Leung *et. al.*, 2005). Culture entails actual behavior as well as interpretation of behavior. GLOBE takes a precise step to develop understanding of cultures by separating values from practices. GLOBE didn't accept these two assumptions. It took an approach in which they asked respondent to express what they want to see in their society or what is desirable instead of asking what they desire as an individual.

2.5 Martin Fouge and Agneta Moulettes's work

Here two other scholars Martin Fouge and Agneta Moulettes seeing the Hofstede's research work critically.

They have given the different approaches to understand the cultural difference which are against the Hofstede's approaches.

The first criticism is that the Hofstede's research work is based on "disciplinary power". He assumes the world in a singular way and ignored the other possible ways. He assumes the whole world as a single culture (Fouge & Moulettes, 2007). Hofstede divide the societies in two sets, one set of developed and modern nation and the second set is the traditional and backward nations.

Hofstede's work reduced the ways in which world can be perceived. He treated the whole world in a same manner. According to Hofstede, the difference in values is essential to differentiate societies.

Hofstede define culture as a programming of mind rather than actions which shape and evaluate the cultures. He just focused on the cultural values (Fouge & Moulettes, 2007).

Similarly, Hofstede's "dimensions of culture" as internal motivational mechanisms, not only reproduce one version of disciplinary power, but also cultivate divisions and unwarranted evaluations of societies.

3. Three Dimensional Models

There are some other dimensional models for understanding the national culture. These dimensional models divided in three parts, single dimension models, multiple dimension models and historical dimension model.

3.1 Single Dimension Models

We try to describe here the single dimension model of national culture. There are three models which are discuss below

3.1.1 High and Low Context Cultures

In this section Hall differentiates the two types of culture, which are, high and low context culture.

People from high context culture make decisions with collaborations of others. First they collect information about that and then taking advices from their friends and family members for decision.

On the other hand the people from low context culture make decisions after taking information from sources other than friends and family members. Other sources are internet, E-mail and many other form of communication. They have used to listened all the things from their colleagues and family members but not rely on that listening.

3.1.2 Monochromic and Polychromic Cultures

Lewis told about the monochromic and polychromic culture. Monochromic people usually try to do one work at a single time whereas the poly chronic people want to do many tasks at a single time.

Here, we try to elaborate both the types with a table which is shown below

Table

Monochromic People	Polychromic People
Do one thing at a time	Do many things at once
Concentrate on the job	Can be easily distracted and manage interruptions well
Take time commitments seriously	Consider an objective to be achieved, if possible
Are low context and need information	Are high context and already have information

Are committed to the job	Are committed to people and human relationships
Adhere religiously to plans	Change plans often and easily
Are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration	Are more concerned with those who are closely related than privacy
Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend	Borrow and lend things often and easily
Emphasize promptness	Base promptness on the relationship
Are accustomed to short term relationships	Have strong tendency to build lifetime relationships

Study found the American people are monochromic and the French people are polychromic. Both countries have the different approaches which are opposite to each other (Hall, T., 1994).

Modern suggest in his article that the mixing of both the cultures are harmful in some times and also beneficial for other time. Because sometimes mixing of both cultures are result of culture clash and disagreement. On the other hand the mixing of both cultures making the synergies that is very beneficial for the society.

3.1.3 Fukuyama's Analysis of Trust

Fukuyama, (1992) analysis the relationship between trust and the organization, he divided the societies in two parts, low trust and high trust societies. In high trust societies the organizations are more flexible and group oriented. They are more responsible and kind with lower level workers. Whereas the low trust organizations are bureaucratic type and opposite of high trust organizations. In high trust cultures the managers treated the employee like a children. Fukuyama suggested here the hierarchy in the organizations. He suggests that all the employees are not able to work with non-hierarchal structure because they have the nature of just obeying the rules.

Fukuyama also suggested that the organizations which are based on societies and shared values work more accurately than hierarchal organizations. If the workers that work together with other workers and share their norms and values are doing best and it is very useful for organizations. So the high trust cultural organizations are more useful then low trust culture.

3.2 Multiple Dimensional Models

3.2.1 Hampden- Turner & Trompenaars' Analysis

Hampden- turner & Trompenaars also work to understand the cross cultural differences. They defined seven value dilemmas and suggested that enterprise value system and associated value judgments depend on these value. These values enable the manager to understand the difference among cultures.

3.2.2 Making rules and managing exceptions

To ensure continuity and consistency in operations, enterprise must formalize rules and standardize operations. Besides standardization, the management system should be flexible to cope up with changes. System must recognizes the change in environment and deal it with innovations. To some extent, there should be centralization or bureaucracy to maintain the reliability of activities and to keep check whether activities are according to standards or not.

3.2.3 Deconstructing and constructing

The management either use analysis or integration. Management analysis the situation or phenomena by dividing it into its part and understand each part to get understanding of whole situation. In integration, management uses various part or issues and creates relationship between them to get an understandable pattern. Mostly, management system of eastern societies focuses on integration.

3.2.4 Managing communities or individuals

Organization should motivate individual employee by career aspiration to keep their productivity and satisfaction level high. Management must motivate them in such a manner so that they can contribute in the well being and success of enterprise. Management has to fulfill the interest of both employees and organization. It is the management task to design a balanced relationship between employee and organization interests. This is difficult task in those societies which are highly individualistic.

3.2.5 Internalizing outside the world

Value system of enterprise determines the origin of direction and purpose. Within organization, internal management provides directions for activities and operations. Organization has interactive relationship with its environment. Management must show that it has effective and well managed relationship with internal and external forces.

3.2.6 Synchronizing time processes

Enterprise's management decides its attitude toward time and how it should be used. This decision puts two questions:

3.2.6.1 The length of time horizon

Length of time horizon depends upon the mission and purpose of enterprise. How an enterprise managed its time; time of production, time of delivery etc. either the goals of enterprise are short term or long term. German and Japanese have long term orientation with respect to their Anglo-Saxon competitors which have short term orientation.

3.2.6.2 Speed or synchronization

Organization must have to decide whether they accomplish their task quickly or focus on synchronization. Organization should not take care of speed but have to focus on the Just in Time (JIT) system. Once organization achieves synchronization, speed will be controlled automatically.

3.2.7 Achieved status versus ascribed status

Organization allocates rewards and status on the basis of two criterias. A first criterion is to allocate rewards and status on the basis of performance and achievement of goals. The status achieved on the basis of performance is achieved status. Second criterion to allocate rewards on the basis of different other factors such as seniority, family association, experience and education. This type of status is called ascribed status.

3.2.8 Equality versus hierarchy.

There are two type of structure in the organizations. First is hierarchal based or bureaucratic and second is equality based or democratic. In hierarchal structured based organizations decision are made by upper level management and lower level management must have to follow the orders. The upper and lower level management treated differently on the basis of their positions in the organizations. Whereas in the equality based organizations, all the employees involve in decision making process and treated equally.

3.2.9 Lessem & Neubauer's Analysis

Lessem and Neubaur also analyze the European management system with the help of four interrelated criteria. These criteria have the impact of national culture.

3.2.9.1 Pragmatism

In the management practices and principles, the pragmatism has prominent influence on it. Pragmatism is experientially oriented and action/ practical oriented approach. It focuses on the capability of enterprise to

be a learning organization. To which extend enterprise learn from its experience and actions.

3.2.9.2 Rationalism

Rationalism is basically the knowledge that asks for reasons. In this approach, management makes decision on the basis of facts and reasons rather than experiences. Rationalistic management relies on that information which is scientifically and logically proved by law. Rational organization focuses on the hierarchy and bureaucracy. Rationalist managers are purely professional and they believe in the planning.

3.2.9.3 Wholism/idealism

Wholism refers as the combination of part to form complex system. It is same as integration where various inter-related issues combine together to understand the whole mechanism. Wholistic management focuses on the integration and co-ordination in their operations and management practices. According to this approach, organization with its environment makes a complex system and both have inter dependence on each other. Organization operations and strategies affect by the changes in environment and environment can be affected by organization's operations. Wholistic management focuses on the establishing and maintaining good relationship of organization with external forces.

3.2.9.4 Humanism

Humanistic approach is related with social life and focus on the relationship among society members. According to humanism, the fullness and well being of man is determined by his relations among the society. Humanism emphasis on groups and families. Humanistic management focuses on the well being of their employees and provide friendly environment.

3.3 Historical Models

3.3.1 The Euromanagement Study

This study is basically the analysis of culture on the basis of history. The purpose of the euro management study is to find out common characteristics between European managers. The study conducted in fourteen European countries and data collected from thirty five chief executives and upper level management. European management comprise following characteristics:

3.3.1.1 The capacity to manage international diversity

There is a one characteristic which combines the European that is diversity. Europeans understand and respect diversity. European organizations accept the diversity at work place and successfully work in different cultures.

3.3.1.2 An orientation towards people

Like Japanese, Europeans also treated people as an important part of business. They don't just treat the people as they are the instrumental and contractual. Now Europeans are moving towards the individualism. They thought that individual have its own importance and shareholders are not just the beneficiaries. European companies focus on the employee's betterment and providing security and quality of life.

3.3.1.3 Social responsibility

European companies are integral part of their societies. They try to act in socially responsible way and work for the betterment of society. Mostly companies just focusing on earning profits and they have no concern with society. But for the European companies profit isn't only goal of company. Companies work for the well being of society.

3.3.1.4 Internal negotiation

In European companies, negotiation is the basis of transactions and internal relations. They have long term perspective, so European companies maintain long term relations based on trust. In long term relations, parties can negotiate for mutual understanding and reduce the damages by negotiation.

3.3.1.5 A degree of informality:

European management is now moving towards the informal communication and negotiation instead of

formal. They use power and authority in some cases but mostly they rely on informal management. European had bad experience with bureaucratic system because of corruption and misuse of authority. They try to sustain the skepticism.

3.3.2 South East Asian Management

In the development of Southeast Asian Management practices there are some historical and social influences. These approaches mainly influence the china. These influences are listed below.

3.3.2.1 Taoism

Taoism is basically the Wholistic philosophy which states that everything in the world are interrelated and interconnected and also the each entity have some internal elements which are opposite to one and other. There must be some agreement between these elements which secure the wholeness of that entity. This wholeness will give the order of oneness and this phenomenon has to change with the law of nature. Not anything in this world which is stagnant and immoveable. Change in everything is naturally. The managers which are static and not try to change become fail in their decisions.

3.3.2.2 Confucianism

Confucianism is another philosophy in China. Confucius was the China's wise at the time and after some time it will become the religious and moral system of chine as after that it will move throughout the South Asia and become the core and ethical part of the South East Asian management. It will become the state religion of the South East Asian countries; like Japan, Vietnam and Korea because the china promotes Confucius very much. There are almost 1.5 billion people that follow the Confucian. According to the concept of ren the society is the type of kindness and benevolence for all the mankind. Confucius divided the society in two main parts, one is the inferior, whose task is to obey the superior and second is the superior whose task is to make the decision and provide a common welfare to the entire human, and their main job is to look after the inferior. It is basically a complex system of ethical and moral values of the culture. The main theme of Confucianism is the humanity. It tells that the human beings are teachable. Human beings are improvable and we can make them perfect through our communication and self-cultivation (Ren, 1997).

3.3.2.2.1 Personal relationship (guanxi)

Personal relationships are the important part of the Confucianism. They have the personal relationship on the basis of give and take idea, means favor from the both sides. Junior must obey the senior and the responsibility of the senior is to look after the junior and giving the favor.

3.3.2.2.2 Face

Face is very important in Confucianism. Face is the dignity of the people. They must take care of their respect. Face is like your nose, if you lose the face its means you lose your nose, eyes or mouth. They are very careful in their social relations and negotiations. They have to see their status while interacting with anyone. Confucius are very limited people and they put some distance while negotiating with anyone.

Chen note and tells their five relationship characteristics. They show the respect between the father and son. There must be Obedience between the manager and employee. Different functions between husband and wife. Order should be maintain between older and younger brother and the trust among friends. Chen focuses on the social differences among relationships. He said that Confucius focuses on the importance of the social order in relationships. In China the relationships among the families are very important, whereas the individuals are less important. Chinese children tried to adjust themselves within the family after birth. In the second part the individual is responsible for their own relationships. He or she has to decide for his or her relations.

4. Proposed Model

This study proposed a model for understanding the national culture. The model shows the additional dimensions of culture. These dimensions are.

4.1 Assertiveness

Some organizations have the assertive culture. People are very confident and they take decisions without any fear. People often don't think while doing decisions (Javidan *et. al.*, 2006).

4.2 Performance Orientation

In performance orientation cultures the organization encourages the reward system. The reward and appreciations are based on the performance of the workers (Javidan *et. al.*, 2006).

4.3 Gender Egalitarian

In this dimension of culture there is gender equality in the organizations. Everyone is treated on equal basis. This dimension finishes the gender discrimination (Javidan *et. al.*, 2006).

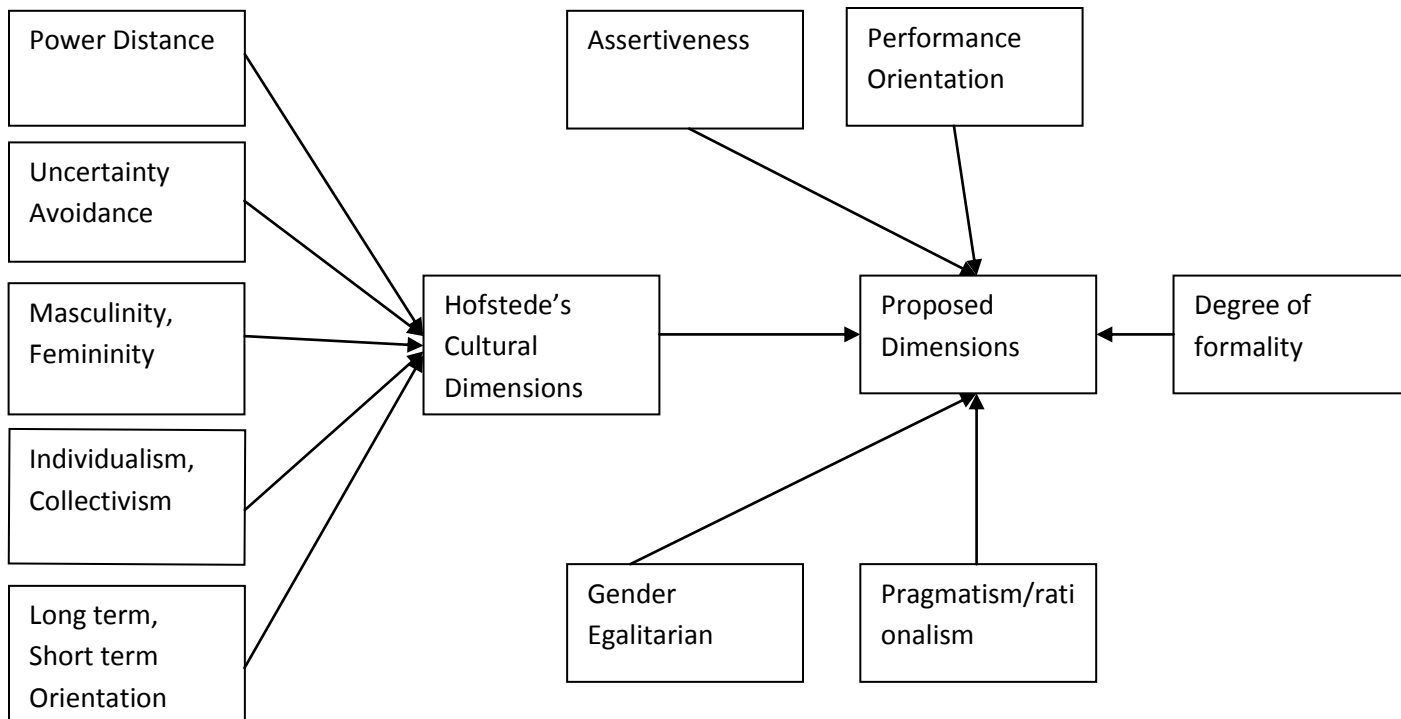
4.4 Pragmatism/Rationalism

Pragmatism is the philosophical approach which shows that the real knowledge is only what you practice. In some cultures people only rely on that information which is practical. They don't focus on that information which cannot be implemented. Whereas, Rationalism is focused on the reason. In this the people just rely on the reasoned based information.

4.5 Degree of formality

In some cultures the people are very formal in relations. Some of Asian countries like China and Japan have very formal culture. On the other hand there is very informality in some countries like Pakistan and India. People of these countries are very informal in their relations (Javidan *et. al.*, 2006).

Model



5. Discussion & Conclusion

There are many models for understanding the national culture including the Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Culture is a very complex term and it is not as simple as Hofstede takes in his study. There are many dimensions that other scholars had given. This paper tries to propose the model to understand the culture with additional dimensions. These additional dimensions are, Assertiveness, performance orientation, gender egalitarian, degree of formality and pragmatism/rationalism. These dimensions can be helpful to understand the culture more critically. By using this model you can change the culture of any organization. An organization can improve their environment and also increase the abilities of the workers by applying this model.

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