Stress, Task, and Relationship Orientations of Vietnamese: An Examination of Gender, Age, and Government Work Experience in the Asian Culture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Working adults are often socialized differently based on their gender, age, and work experience. To explore the stress, task, and relationship orientations of people in the high-context culture of Vietnam, this study collected data from 188 Vietnamese. It appears that they have similar scores on the relationship and task orientations. The Vietnamese reported a high level of stress. Government work experience and education do appear to be a significant factor in the difference of stress perception scores. In this paper, literature on high and low context cultures is presented along with practical application, suggestions, and implications for future studies.

Keywords: Relationships, Tasks, Culture, High context, Low context, Stress, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural background and context is an important predictor of behavior. For example, there is a distinction in communication between so-called high-context and low-context cultures (Tajaddini & Mujtaba, 2011; Mujtaba & Balboa, 2009; Salleh, 2005). In high-context cultures such as Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, China, Japan, Iran, Afghanistan, or India, there is a less verbally detailed communication and less written/formal information. Instead, there is a more common understanding of what is being communicated through general context. Often what is left unsaid is as important as what is said. Low context cultures put more emphasis on the written or spoken words as communication is more explicit. Context indicates the level in which communication occurs outside of verbal discussion (Mujtaba & Balboa, 2009). Understanding the effect of the differences in context provides a knowledge base and cultural intelligence that can help provide not only strong teams but moreover effective business relationships with a firm’s vendors and customers (Hall, 1976; Salleh, 2005; Mujtaba & Balboa, 2009).

In the competitive world of manufacturing and retail businesses, understanding behaviors of employees are paramount to succeeding. It is important for managers, trainers, and researchers to reflect on their relationships with people of different cultures and examine how differences in context can lead to cultural misunderstanding for overseas employees living or working in Vietnam or other high context cultures. The purpose of this study is to analyze the stress orientation as well as relationship similarities and dissimilarities between adult Vietnamese based on gender, age, education, and government work experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vietnam and the Culture

Located in Southeastern Asia, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, or Vietnam for short, has a population of about 90.5 million people with more than two-thirds of them about 15-64 years of age. Hanoi, located in the north of Vietnam, is the capital.