Cultural comparison in Asian countries: An Application of Greet Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

D.M.S.B. Dissanayake, W.W.A.E. Niroshan, M.H.Nisansala, M.L.D. Rangani, S.K.R.A. Samarathunga, S.E.I. Subasinghe, D.N. Wickramaarachchi, Kalani Nirasha, D.N. Wickramasinghe, W.W.M.E.G.P.M.B.Wickramasinghe

Supervised by
Mr. S.C.Thushara

Abstract

Countries differ from one country to another country by their identical characteristics which are coming under their own national culture. People behaviors are respectively linked to cultural values of the country and this association is based on the framework of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The study indicates the cultural differences of the countries among the world according to a four dimension which are Power distance, Uncertainty avoidance, Individualism vs. collectivism and Masculinity vs. femininity. Power distance means the extent to the nations which accept the power in organization or anywhere is distributed unequally without further justifications. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected by the Uncertainty avoidance. The third dimension is Individualism vs. collectivism which reflect the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members, and the fourth dimension, Masculinity vs. femininity indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner / best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organizational behavior. The purpose of this study is comparing the national culture in Asian countries and identifies what factors affect to association with the Hofstede's cultural dimension studies.

In this study we identify the how above four dimensions index behave on Asia. The power index of almost all the countries in Asia take high value that means all the nations in Asia has been tend to accept the power coming from top without further justifications. Uncertainty avoidance index of the Asia is scored low amount excepting few countries indicating the lot of nations in Asia who not comfortable with an ambiguity situations. Masculinity vs. femininity index of the every Asian countries score a small amount excepting Japan, Iraq reflecting the nation who work in order to live rather than live in order to work. Individualism vs. Collectivism index shows small value in countries below 50 in

almost every country in Asia reflecting nations who highly desire for collectivism than individually survive.

Paper Type: Model Testing.

Definition of culture

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. The Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition goes a step further, defining culture as shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group.(Zimmermann, 2015).Geert has defined it as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another". The "category" can refer to nations, regions within or across nations, ethnicities, religions, occupations, organizations, or the genders. A simpler definition is 'the unwritten rules of the social game'.

Human behavior and national culture

Human behaviors are mainly and highly affected by the national culture of the country. Two caveats are in order here. The first is that societies and their cultures are not necessarily as tidy and homogeneous as this introductory account suggests.(Witt, 1996).The second is that as a society becomes more complex, and especially as its economy moves into a highly diffracted modern form, then much of its members" behavior takes place inside discrete provinces of meaning, bounded by particular spheres of action (Sorge, 2005).Culture inspires a first-stage implied contract of conformity to what is collectively seen as right and proper. People accept this because they are instinctively gregarious and dependent on membership. Conformity has a cost worth paying. The second stage is to take such definitions and create a form of stable order to express them. When norms are embedded into regular patterns of behavior, such as a business executive always wearing a suit, then when seen altogether the society has created a layer of institutions. These are not culture, but translations of cultural ideals into stable forms of action – situation-specific expressions of meaning in action (Michael Harris Bond,Michael A. Witt, 2012).

According to that we can say culture is created by the human being as they want to stand in conformity to being as together set of attitudes, norms, expectations,

etc. That create unique behavior for peoples who lived in there society differing from another culture's human behavior.

Cultural differences in the world

Mainly the world's cultures can be categorized into five terms. They are Western culture, Easton culture, Latin culture, Middle Eastern culture and African culture. The western culture can be seen in European countries like United States, United Kingdom etc. The culture has been emerged in the classical period of the Greco-Roman era and the rise of Christianity in the 14th century. Today, the influences of western culture can be seen in almost every country in the world.

Eastern culture generally refers to the societal norms of countries in China, Japan, India, Korea, and etc. This culture was heavily influenced by the religion especially Load Buddha and peoples are highly tend to agricultural sector farming different kind of foods. Generally Eastern culture is a less of a distinction between secular society and religious philosophy than the West.

Latin America is typically defined as mix of Central America, South America and Mexico where dominant language is Spanish or Portuguese.

Middle East countries are in common in almost every aspect but not quietly. This consists of approximately 20 countries. The Arabic language is one thing that is common for throughout region. Religion is another cultural area that those countries tied up in common. The Middle is the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The continent of Africa is essential to all cultures. History says, human life originated on this continent and began to migrate to other arias of the world around 60000 years ago. Africa is home to a number of tribes' ethnic and social group. They have number of languages. Cuisines, art, dress, and musical styles and dance which are shows their identity to the world.

National culture in Asian countries

Asia is sub divided into 48 countries and Asia is the earth's largest and most populous continent. Though it covers only 8.7% of the Earth's total surface area, it comprises 30% of earth's land area and population of the continent approximately 4.4 billion people.

The culture of Asia is human civilization in Asia. It features different kinds of cultural heritage of many nationalities, societies, and ethnic groups in the region, traditionally called a continent from a Western-centric perspective, of Asia. Above cultural changes affected human behavior of the people in country

within Asia in differently The region or "continent" is more commonly divided into more natural geographic and cultural sub regions, including Central Asia, East Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and West Asia .Geographically, Asia is not a distinct continent; culturally, there has been little unity or common history for many of the cultures and peoples of Asia. Asian art, music, and cuisine, as well as literature, are important parts of Asian culture. Eastern philosophy and religion also plays a major role, with Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam all playing major roles. One of the most complex parts of Asian culture is the relationship between traditional cultures and the Western world.(Wekipedia)

Hofstede's culture Dimensions

When comparing the national culture of countries, it is very important point is Hofstede's culture dimension. Geert Hofstede is a researcher in the fields of organizational studies and more concretely organizational culture, also cultural economics and management.

Who identified four dimensions of national culture that were positioned against analysis of 40 initial countries in 1980 which are Power distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity vs. Femininity. Here, he identified economic and political situation is reason to differentiate the national culture of a country. Earlier as a trained psychologist, his analysis of the survey data based on at the individual respondent level at IBM. At the end of two years, he realized he needed an "ecological" analysis, in which respondents were contextualized by their countries. By aggregating individuals as societal units, he could examine national cultures rather than individual personalities.

In 2010 he released his new edition of culture and organization where he indicates another two dimension of national culture as long term orientation and Indulgence versus restraint to measure national culture.

- **Power distance index (PDI)**: Power Distance has been defined as the extent to which the less powerful members' of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society. All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others. (Hofstede G. , 2011)

- **Individualism vs. collectivism:** "The degree to which individuals are integrated into groups". In individualistic societies, the stress is put on personal achievements and individual rights. People are expected to stand up for themselves and their immediate family, and to choose their own affiliations. In contrast, in collectivist societies, individuals act predominantly as members of a lifelong and cohesive group or organization (Hofstede, 2011). People have large extended families, which are used as a protection in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

- **Uncertainty avoidance index** (UAI): "a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity". It reflects the extent to which members of a society attempt to cope with anxiety by minimizing uncertainty. People in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to be more emotional. They try to minimize the occurrence of unknown and unusual circumstances and to proceed with careful changes step by step planning and by implementing rules, laws and regulations. In contrast, low uncertainty avoidance cultures accept and feel comfortable in unstructured situations or changeable environments and try to have as few rules as possible. People in these cultures tend to be more pragmatic, they are more tolerant of change.

- **Masculinity (MAS), vs. femininity**: "The distribution of emotional roles between the genders". Masculine cultures' values are competitiveness, assertiveness, materialism, ambition and power, whereas feminine cultures place more value on relationships and quality of life. In masculine cultures, the differences between gender roles are more dramatic and less fluid than in feminine cultures where men and women have the same values emphasizing modesty and caring. As a result of the taboo on sexuality in many cultures, particularly masculine ones, and because of the obvious gender generalizations implied by Hofstede's terminology, this dimension is often renamed by users of Hofstede's work, e.g. to Quantity of Life vs. Quality of Life.

- **Long-term orientation (LTO)**, vs. short term orientation: First called "Confucian dynamism", it describes societies' time horizon. Long term oriented societies attach more importance to the future. They foster pragmatic values oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation. In short term oriented societies, values promoted are related to the past and the present, including steadiness,

respect for tradition, preservation of one's face, reciprocation and fulfilling social obligations.

- **Indulgence versus restraint** (IVR): The extent to which member in society try to control their desires and impulses. Whereas indulgent societies have a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun, restrained societies have a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict norms.

Cultural comparison in countries according to Hofsted's dimension

To continue this research we selected 20 countries which represent all the culture according to country's location in Asia continent to compare culture dispersion among countries according to Hofstede's culture dimensions. In here mainly we focus on four dimensions which are early development of Hofstede's model as power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity Vs. femininity to compare Asian countries because the some countries not score on Long-term orientation (LTO) Indulgence versus restraint index .

Power Distance

Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. According to Hofstede center power distance Index of selected countries are figured as below.
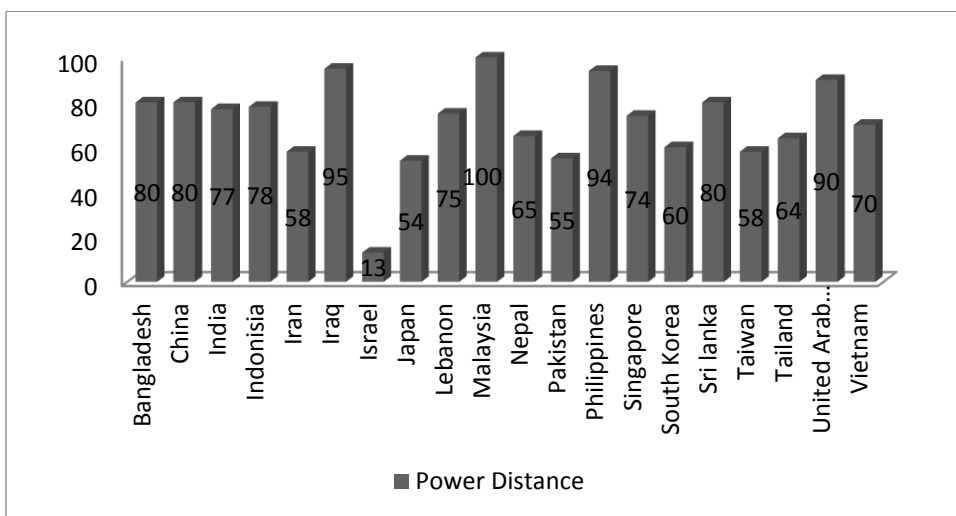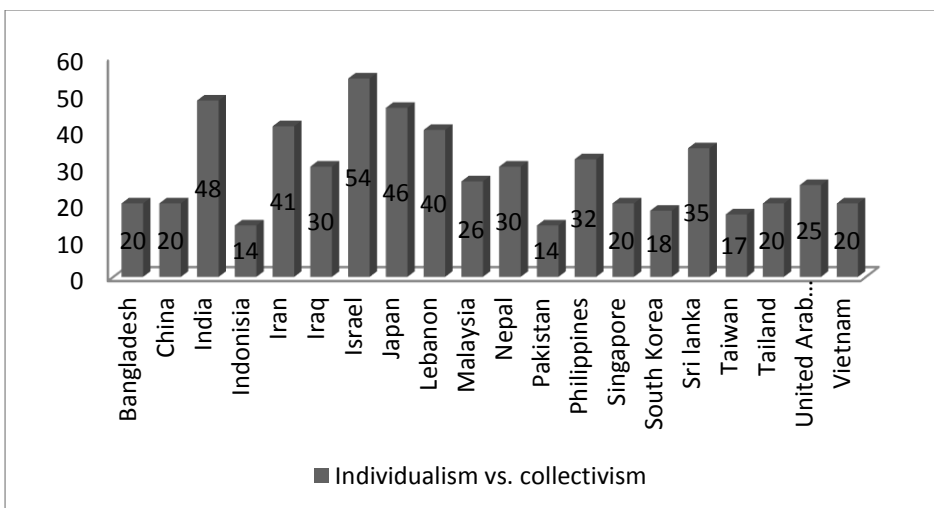
According to above graph high power index are recorded by country respectively Malaysia, Iraq, Philippines, United Arab Emirates. Which mean those country's people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification more in Malaysia? Those are hierarchical society reflecting inherent inequalities, centralization is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat, Challenges to the leadership are not well-received.

Low Power distance index are scored by the Israel that is very less amount when compare to other countries. The reason behind that with an egalitarian mindset the Israelis believe in independency, equal rights, accessible superiors and that management facilitates and empowers. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Respect among the Israelis is something which who earns by proving hands-on expertise. Workplaces have an informal atmosphere with direct and involving communication and on a first name basis. Employees expect to be consulted. , Japan score an intermediate score of 54 is a borderline hierarchical society. Japanese are always conscious of their hierarchical position in any social setting and act accordingly. However, Japan has slow decision making process: all the decisions must be confirmed by each hierarchical layer and finally by the top management in Tokyo. Their slow decision making process shows that in Japanese society there is no one top guy who can take decision like in more hierarchical societies. Not so high power distance is that Japan has always been a meritocratic society. There is a strong notion in the Japanese education system that everybody is born equal and anyone can get ahead and become anyone if he works hard enough.

Individualism vs. collectivism

The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people´s self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. According to Hofstede center Individualism vs. collectivism Index of selected countries is showed as below. In Collectivist society's people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty

Source: Research data

According to above graph high individualism index are recorded by country respectively Israel, India, Japan. The Israeli society is a blend of individualistic and collectivistic cultures scored 54. The reason to that small families focus on the parent-children relationship rather than aunts and uncles are common and at the same time extended families, focus many children and close ties to all other family members are a part of society as well. There is a strong belief in the ideal of self-actualization. Loyalty is based on personal preferences for people as well as a sense of duty and responsibility. Communication is direct and expressive.

India, with a rather intermediate score of 48, is a society with both collectivistic and individualistic traits. The collectivist side means that there is a high preference for belonging to a larger social framework in which individuals are expected to act in accordance to the greater good of one's defined in-group. In such situations, the actions of the individual are influenced by various concepts such as the opinion of one's family, extended family, neighbors, work group and other such wider social networks that one has some affiliation toward. The individualistic aspect of Indian society is seen as a result of its dominant religion/philosophy - Hinduism. The Hindus believe in a cycle of death and rebirth, with the manner of each rebirth being dependent upon how the individual lived the preceding life. People are, therefore, individually responsible for the way they lead their lives and the impact it will have upon their rebirth. This focus on individualism interacts with the otherwise collectivist tendencies of the Indian society which leads to its intermediate score on this dimension.

Japan scores 46 on this dimension. Certainly Japanese society shows many of the characteristics of a collectivistic society: such as putting harmony of group above

the expression of individual opinions and people have strong senses of shame for losing face. But is not as collectivistic as most of Asian neighbors. The most popular explanation for this is that Japanese society does not have extended family system which forms a base of more collectivistic societies such as China and Korea. Japan has been a paternalistic society and the family name and asset was inherited from father to the eldest son. The younger siblings had to leave home and make their own living with their core families. Japanese are famous for their loyalty to their companies, while Chinese seem to job hop more easily. However, company loyalty is something which people have chosen for themselves, which is an individualistic thing to do. While in more collectivistic culture, people are loyal to their inner group by birth, such as their extended family and their local community.

Low index are figured out by the countries Indonesia, Pakistan scoring amount 14, while Bangladesh, China, Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand 20. Indonesia and Pakistan is high Collectivist society. One place this is visible clearly is in the aspect of the Family in the role of relationships. In Indonesia, if one wishes to marry, it is important to meet a woman's family because the family is so important to her. If a man wants to be taken seriously by a woman, he has to visit the latter's family and introduce himself formally to the parents of the girl. It is inappropriate to court a woman and formalize the relationship without informing the parents of the girl first. Another example of collectivist culture of Indonesia is in the equation between child and parent. Indonesian children are committed to their parents, as are the parents committed to them all their growing lives. Their desire is to make their parents' life easier. There is a desire to take care of parents and give them support in their old age. At a score of 20 China is a highly collectivist culture where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily of themselves. In-group considerations affect hiring and promotions with closer in-groups are getting preferential treatment. Employee commitment to the organization is low. Whereas relationships with colleagues are cooperative for in-groups they are cold or even hostile to out-groups. Personal relationships prevail over task and company.

Singapore, with a score of 20 is a collectivistic society. This means that the "We" is important, people belong to in-groups who look after each other in exchange for loyalty. Here we can also see the second key principle of the Confucian teaching: The family is the prototype of all social organizations. A person is not primarily an individual; rather, he or she is a member of a family. Children should learn to restrain themselves, to overcome their individuality so as to maintain the harmony in the family. Harmony is found when everybody saves face in the sense of dignity, self-respect, and prestige. Social relations should be conducted in such a way that everybody's face is saved. Paying respect to someone is called giving

face. Communication is indirect and the harmony of the group has to be maintained, open conflicts are avoided.

Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand with a score of 20 is considered a collectivistic society also. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships.

Uncertainty avoidance index

Uncertainty avoidance Index show extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater carrier stability, establishing more suitable rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise. According to Hofstede Uncertainty avoidance Index of selected countries is showed as below.
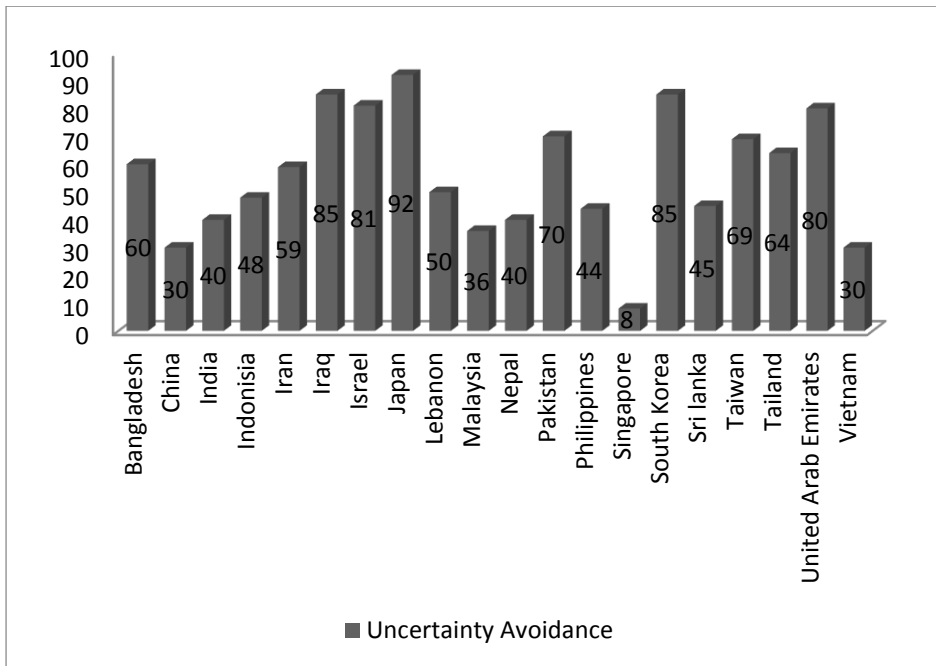
Source: Research data

According to above graph high Uncertainty avoidance figure are scored by the countries in respectively Japan, Iraq, South Korea, Israel. At 92 Japan is one of the most uncertainties avoiding countries. This is often attributed to the fact that Japan is constantly threatened by natural disasters from earthquakes, tsunamis typhoons to volcano eruptions. Under these circumstances Japanese learned to prepare themselves for any uncertain situation. This goes not only for the

emergency plan and precautions for sudden natural disasters but also for every other aspects of society. In corporate Japan, a lot of time and effort is put into feasibility studies and all the risk factors must be worked out before any project can start. Managers ask for all the detailed facts and figures before taking any decision. This high need for uncertainty avoidance is one of the reasons why changes are so difficult to realize in Japan.

Iraq, South Korea scores 85 and Israel 81 on this dimension and thus has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, security is an important element in individual motivation
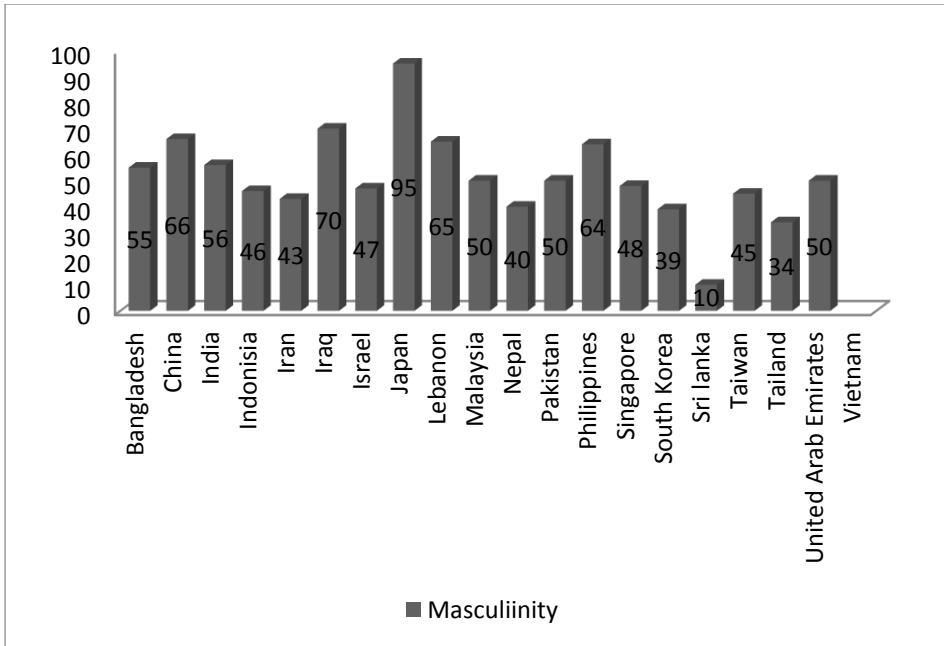
Uncertainty avoidance figure are scored by the countries in respectively Singapore, China Vietnam. Singapore scores 8 on this dimension and thus scores very low in Asia. Reason behind that Singapore people abide to many rules not because they have need for structure but because of high PDI. Singaporeans call their society a "Fine country. You'll get a fine for everything".

At 30 China has a low score on uncertainty avoidance. The Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity; the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow. Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial. The majority (70% -80%) of Chinese businesses tend to be small to medium sized and family owned.

Vietnam scores 30 on this dimension and thus has a low preference for avoiding uncertainty. Low UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles and deviance from the norm is more easily tolerated. In societies exhibiting low UAI, people believe there should be no more rules than are necessary and if they are ambiguous or do not work they should be abandoned or changed. Schedules are flexible, hard work is undertaken when necessary but not for its own sake, precision and punctuality do not come naturally, innovation is not seen as threatening

Masculinity vs. femininity

The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the UAI score. According to Hofstede centre Masculinities. femininity Index of selected countries is showed as below

Bar chart showing Masculinity index by country: Bangladesh 55, China 66, India 56, Indonisia 46, Iran 43, Iraq 70, Israel 47, Japan 95, Lebanon 65, Malaysia 50, Nepal 40, Pakistan 50, Philippines 64, Singapore 48, South Korea 39, Sri lanka 10, Taiwan 45, Tailand 34, United Arab Emirates 50, Vietnam. Legend: Masculiinity

Source: Research data

High Masculinity vs. femininity Index scored by the countries respectively Japan, That is high amount than the other countries, while Iraq, Philippines scoring considerable value

At 95, Japan is one of the most masculine societies in the world. In masculine culture which often associate with Assertive and competitive individual behaviors. From very young age at kindergartens, children learn to compete on sports day for their groups traditionally red team against white team. In corporate Japan, those employees are most motivated when they are fighting in a winning team against their competitors. Masculinity in Japan is the drive for excellence and perfection in their material production (monodukuri) and in material services (hotels and restaurants) and presentation (gift wrapping and food presentation) in every aspect of life. Notorious Japanese work holism is another expression of their masculinity. It is still hard for women to climb up the corporate ladders in Japan with their masculine norm of hard and long working hours.

Iraq scores 70 on this dimension and is thus a masculine society. In masculine countries people "live in order to work", managers are expected to be decisive and assertive, the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance and conflicts are resolved by fighting them out.

At 66 China is a masculine society –success oriented and driven. Many Chinese will sacrifice family and leisure priorities to work. Service people (such as hairdressers) will provide services until very late at night. Leisure time is not so important. The migrated farmer workers will leave their families behind in faraway places in order to obtain better work and pay in the cities. Another example is that Chinese students care very much about their exam scores and ranking as this is the main criteria to achieve success or not.

Low Masculinity scores are reflected by the countries which are Sri Lanka that is lowest value in Asia. Where Sri Lanka, is considered a feminine society they focus is on "working in order to live", managers strive for consensus, people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored. Focus is on well-being and status is not shown or emphasized. As well as there is unrevealed link to entrepreneurial thinking being below moderate level of masculinity in Sri Lanka. (D.M.N.S.W. Dissanayake, D.M.Semasinghe, 2015)

Furthermore almost all the country in Asia scored below 50 such as Indonesia, Nepal, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Israel, Iran showing there incentives as free time and flexibility are favored to work in order to live. Focus is on well-being, status is not shown. An effective manager is a supportive one, and decision making is achieved through involvement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mainly we can say national culture of each country differs from one country to another country according to Hofstede's culture dimension. In here we can conclude the four dimension's index earlier we discussed that reflects numerous figures in Asia for each index, emphasizing the nations in Asia not same to each other. When consider the power index almost all the countries in Asia take high above 50, that means all the nations in Asia has been tend to accept the power coming from organizational hierarchy without further justifications. Uncertainty avoidance index of the Asia is scored low amount excepting few countries which Japan, South Korea, Iraq, Israel and Iraq, indicating the lot of nations in Asia who not comfortable with an ambiguity situations. Masculinity vs. femininity index of the every Asian countries score a small amount excepting Japan, Iraq reflecting the nation who work in order to live rather than live in order to work. Individualism vs. Collectivism index shows small value in countries below 50 in almost every country in Asia reflecting nations who highly desire for collectivism than individually survive.

Furthermore we identified one dimension score value can change another dimension value as in Singapore which score lowest value in Uncertainty Avoidance that is influenced by their high Power Distance value according to Hofstede center. Furthermore that indicate some dimension to be record high score that are affected by the country's inherent natural disaster as Japan's high scored on Asia when compare to other country.

Finally we can say though Asian countries in similar at a one sight it features different kinds of cultural heritage of many peoples, societies, groups, region.

References:

D.M.N.S.W. Dissanayake, D.M.Semasinghe. (2015). Is culture a restraining or a driving force for entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. Academic Journals .

Helsink, A. (n.d.). Itim International. Retrieved from Itim International Web Site: http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture , 26.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture , 9-12.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimentionalizing Culture:The Hofstede Model In Contex. Online reading in Pschology and culture , 9-12.

Hofstede, G. (n.d.). The Hofsted Centre. Retrieved May 24, 2015, from Itim international: http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html

Michael Harris Bond,Michael A. Witt. (2012). Culture and the Business Systems of Asia. Gordon Redding , 25.

Paul E spetor,Cary C. Cooper,Kate Sparts. (2001). An international study of the psychometric properties of the Hofstede values. Malden: Blackwell .

Sorge, A. (2005). The Global and the Loca lUnderstanding the Dialectics of Business Systems. Oxferd Univesity Press.

Wekipedia. (n.d.). Retrieved 05 26, 2015, from Wekipedia Web site: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Asia

Witt, M. A. (1996). Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory[2nd edition]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmermann, K. A. (2015, 02 19). live science. Retrieved from alibaba.com: http://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html