

PNG's Culture and Implications for Public Policy

Dr. Lhawang Ugyel (Public Policy)

Dr. Leo Marai (Psychology)

University of Papua New Guinea

(2017 PNG UPDATE: 11th August, 2017)

Main objective of the presentation

- The presentation starts with a premise that human cultural values are “universal”, and there are universal cultural similarities and differences in values that exist across nations (countries) and different cultural groupings. Global indexing of values through comparative analysis is one meaningful way of understanding societies and human social behaviour.
- The presentation will highlight the methods of the study and the findings of the Values Survey Module (VSM) 2013 derived from Emeritus Professor G. Hofstede’s work for PNG. (No study to date in PNG has examined the VSM, except Triandis et al. (1986) cross-cultural study on Individualism-Collectivism values. Findings- PNG is a collectivist society and Australia is a individualist society).
- The findings from this study will be helpful as it has implications for further research and practice in PNG in fields such as public policy, public administration, psychology, anthropology and organizational studies.

Importance of “culture”

- Social science disciplines have recognized the importance of a country’s culture. A country has a culture.
- In recent years, culture has been one of the ‘research constructs’ in areas such as management, psychology, accounting and marketing (Taras et al. 2012, p.329).
- Culture influences human behaviour and practices.
- G. Hofstede’s (1980) famous international cross-cultural study on work values provide a useful starting point for comparing cultures on certain values dimensions that are found to be “universal”.
- Cultural values define a country’s culture (Hofstede, 1980)

Hofstede's Values Survey Module (VSM)

- Hofstede's multidimensional cultural model originates from his analysis of 116,000 survey questionnaires of IBM employees in 72 countries in 1980 (Minkov and Hofstede 2011).
- To make meaningful comparisons with cultures of other countries based on the VSM, Hofstede recommends that the study should be 'anchored' by including at least one new sample from one IBM country (Hofstede 2001, 464).
- According to Hofstede so long as the participants represent a homogenous group the findings should provide an insight to the nation's culture.

Components of VSM

- In the initial survey, four main values were assessed—Power Distance (PD), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UA).
- In VSM 2008: Long-term Orientation (LTO), Monumentalism (MON) and Indulgence versus Restraint Index (IVR) were included.
- In VSM 2013: PD, IDV, MAS, UA, LTO and IVR.
- We will use five main values in our study: PD, IDV, MAS, UA and LTO

Definitions of the values

- PD is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. For example in collectivist societies such as PNG & Asia there is a greater distance between the boss and subordinate than in Individualistic society such as US and Australia.
- IDV stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose and a person is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only (e.g. western societies like US, etc); whereas collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (non-western societies like PNG, Africa, Asia, etc).
- MAS stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (e.g. non-western societies). Femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (e.g. western societies).

- UA is defined as the extent to which the members of institutions and organisations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations.
- LTO stands for a society which fosters virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular adaptation, perseverance and thrift (e.g. Western societies). Short-term orientation stands for a society which fosters virtues related to the past and present, in particular respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations (e.g. non-western societies).

Methodology

- Pilot survey (VSM-2013) in November - December 2016
- Survey with academics in PNG and Australia in January – March 2017—poor response
- Survey with undergraduate students in PNG and Australia (also did with Bhutan as a control/comparison) April – June 2017.
- Exact survey designed by the original researchers
 - <http://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/vsm-2013/>
 - 24 questions on various aspects of culture
 - 6 demographic questions

Responses

- PNG
 - 111
 - students from University of Papua New Guinea (paper-based survey)
- Australia
 - 53
 - Students from University of Canberra (paper-based survey)
- Bhutan
 - 55
 - Students from Royal Thimphu College (online survey)

(Minimum recommended responses to calculate scores 50 from each country).

Calculation of the VSM 2013 scores

- Based on the 24 culture based questions of the VSM-2013 (Likert Type scoring from 1 to 5 in terms of degree of agreement and frequency)
- Each question has a score and the formula to calculate the cultural values and are based on a combination of the scores as provided in the manual

<http://geerthofstede.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Manual-VSM-2013.pdf>

VSM 2013 scores for PNG, Australia and Bhutan

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
PNG	46	69	69	39	13
AUSTRALIA	36	90	61	51	21
BHUTAN	36	84	67	66	18

No variations!!!

Bhutan earlier (2011)	46	14	25	50	10
----------------------------------	----	----	----	----	----

Implications

- Data issues
 - Re-check data entry (Already Done!)
 - Need to do more statistical analysis to check consistency of data
 - Among the three countries
 - And between the scores of Bhutan (2011 vs. 2017)
- Also, students cannot be used as respondents to generate VSM scores (?)
- Validity of the value constructs?

Conclusions

- If data entry is incorrect, then VSM will be helpful for various policy analysis in PNG, for e.g. performance management, policy making, etc.
- If data is correct, we can use the information to argue that using students to generate VSM results in inaccurate scores. (Hence, we will and have started to get new data from workers in those 3 countries to see if variations exists on those 5 values among PNG, Australia & Bhutan)
- Why there are no variations but similarities on those 5 universal values between PNG and Australia? Has PNG become like an Australian society on those values?
- Mixed results have been reported by some studies after Hofstede's work , especially Ind-Col value (e.g., Oyserman et al., 2002; A.P. Fiske, 2002)
- Overall, our data is consistent with from the results of meta-analysis challenging the construct validity of Ind-Col. values found by Oyserman et al. (2002), published in *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 128, pages 3-72. We quote from Fiske (2002) commentary on Oyerman et al. paper : ***"In most cases the results from any nation are quite heterogeneous, suggesting that there is something wrong with these constructs and/or scales as national difference measures."*** (p.79)

Acknowledgements

- We appreciate our colleagues lecturers at UPNG: Mr. Gordon Montoru, Mr. Asali Kale, Mr. Peter Tulapi of and others for giving their time in collecting the survey data from their students.
- We would like to thank the UPNG students who voluntarily responded to the survey.