Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory

LaRae Laurent

[Name of the Institution]

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**Introduction**

This paper will examine the cultural dimensions theory proposed in the research of Geert Hofstede. This theory provides a systematic framework in which different nations and their cultures are thoroughly assessed on six cultural dimensions which are as follows:

1. Index of Power Distance
2. Collectivism v Individualism
3. Index of Uncertainty Avoidance
4. Femininity v Masculinity
5. Short-term Orientation v Long-term Orientation
6. Restraint v Indulgence

While referring to Geert Hofstede, he is the best-known anthropologist and social psychologist belonging from the Netherlands. One of the significant areas of research for which Hofstede has spent his life is the variable of culture. He has conducted in-depth studies to establish cross-cultural interactions between different groups of employees and organizations (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). The most significant accomplishment in his research-based career was the development of cultural dimensions theory. It was because of his considerable efforts in cultural research that he received numerous awards and honorary doctorates from different universities across the world, particularly Europe (Hofstede, 2010).

**Discussion**

**Key Facts and Validity of Hofstede’s Research**

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory is still considered one of the most valid and applicable research frameworks in the modern era of globalization. He argued that every individual gets groomed in different family background and thus develop diverse mentalities which are not similar to each other. These mental abilities get groomed during their academic and professional life. Hofstede emphasized that in reality, these cognitive abilities form the culture of a society. This urged him to exploit the cultural differences that exist between organizations of different countries (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017).

Thus Hofstede conducted his research with a sample size of more than 115,000 respondents residing in over forty countries. Majority of these respondents were employees in International Business Machines (IBM). This research exploited how the employees working in numerous organizations based in multiple states differ from each other on the basis of power, collectivism, gender, uncertainty, future orientation, and indulgence of the workforce to satisfy their needs.

Despite being a significant multinational theory in industrial psychology and organizational behavior, the cultural dimensions theory faced some criticism as well. Firstly, sample size based entirely on the employees of IBM Corporation. Moreover, although the data for the cultural dimensions gets updated continuously since its introduction in the late 1970s, the critics call the theory as obsolete as it is now approximately fifty years old. The critics demand new studies to be carried out in the research area of culture, which can replace these outdated cultural dimensions (Bakir et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the modern day organizations still value these dimensions while making organizational policies and strategies.

**Femininity v Masculinity Scale**

Although the framework of Hofstede's theory consists of six cultural dimensions. There will be a discussion on femininity v masculinity for this paper. This particular dimension highlights that there are both masculine and feminine aspects of society (Bakir et al., 2015). If elements of one gender dominate the other in society's values, it is depicted in the culture of that specific country. Masculine aspects may include ambition, boldness, materialism, and power. On the other hand, feminine elements consist of emotional factors and emphasize personal relationships.

If a nation’s culture is masculine, it will score low on this scale as the culture will depict high competition between firms, a struggle for power between internal management and assertiveness in decision-making. In contrast, a feminine culture will highly emphasize strengthening interpersonal relationships between employees and thus score high on this scale. This culture promotes the ideology that emotions of the employees should be given respect within organizations. In other words, this dimension describes masculinity as powerful and fearless, and femininity as soft-cornered and emotional in organizational practices.

**Cultural Dimensions Theory and Expatriates**

In the spotlight of the above discussion regarding cultural dimensions theory, there are several factors which I have to consider as an HR professional before sending new expatriates for assignments in Japan. The expatriates must realize that Japanese culture is strongly masculine which means that if expatriates are emotionally-sensitive, they have to leave this sensitivity behind if they want to carry out the assignments in Japan successfully. Secondly, Japanese organizations are known to be typically centralized in decision-making, and thus there is a high power distance between management and employees. Expatriates need to realize that they should not be too much outspoken to give their opinion regarding working patterns in centralized firms, they might receive a negative backlash on such actions as the tolerance or indulgence levels are also low in these firms (Fee, A., & McGrath-Champ, 2013).

Moreover, the new expatriates should also be aware of that fact that Japanese firms do not embrace the factor of change in a sudden period. They focus more on risk-aversion and entirely avoid any uncertain situations. Therefore, expatriates should accept to work in whatever circumstances the organization provides them. However, as the firms in Japan are more focused on long-term gains, expatriates should expect to work in a setting where the job tasks are more goal-oriented and envisioned to achieve success in the future.

**Conclusion**

This paper thoroughly analyzed the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede along with his synopsis. Several key facts associated with the particular theory were highlighted along with an explanation of one of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede’s theory. This discussion established itself as a source of knowledge for the new expatriates before they go on to perform their assignments in Japan. As an HR professional, it was my job to prepare expatriates for those assignments. Thus the elaborated insight about the theory of cultural dimensions in this paper would assist me to make the expatriates apply the knowledge of this theory practically during their cross-cultural training.

**References**

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