

Connections Between Ethics and Cultural Dimensions

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Ethical issues typically arise because of conflicts between individuals' personal moral philosophies and values and the values and attitudes of the organizations in which they work and the society in which they live. The research question is: Are there connections between national culture and ethics? This paper adopts a deontological approach by testing the absoluteness of "right" and "wrong" and the importance of the No-harm Principle (cf. Pojman, 2002). Three countries were selected to conduct the investigation – Brazil, China, and Estonia. These three countries are from three different cultural clusters. A scale was developed to measure Ethical Relativism and No-harm Principle. The national cultural connection was stronger with Ethical Relativism, where six cultural practices and two cultural values seem to be related to how people think about what is right and wrong. Concerning the No-Harm Principle one should not psychologically or physically harm another person, nor perform an action which might threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual, only In-Group Collectivism as a value was (negatively) connected with the No-Harm Principle. As a managerial suggestion, organizations ought to pay attention to the following cultural dimensions when doing business in different cultures could be useful: In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Humane Orientation, Performance Orientation, Future Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism.

Keywords: *ethics, cultural practices, cultural values, Estonia, China, Brazil.*

Introduction

As global economies intertwine and more organizations interact with their global partners and competitors through joint ventures, partnership and competition for customers, it becomes increasingly important to understand different cultural values, traditions and beliefs that are guiding the behaviours of individuals. Ethical issues typically arise because of conflicts between individuals' personal moral philosophies and values and the values of the organizations in which they work and the society in which they live (Ferrell and Fraedrich, 1997). In order to handle these conflicts successfully, people, and especially top managers, have to build up appropriate organizational ethical concepts and standards and apply them appropriately, as well as to be able to predict the outcomes.

The research question in this paper is how ethics is related with national culture. This explores our understanding of ethics, and helps us successfully handle ethical conflicts, and avoid or at least resolve crises. In this paper, the term "ethics" has a relatively broad meaning – it does not only refer to business ethics, but also to social ethics.

The paper starts with an overview of the theory, including definitions of ethics, illustrations of the three main theoretical ethical systems, the scope and domains of ethical conflicts, and an analysis of the factors influencing ethics. This is followed by an analysis of an empirical study conducted in Brazil, China and Estonia.

Theoretical Background

Ethics scholars hold various positions and have defined and classified ethics under various categories.

Definition of Ethics

According to Spence and Van Heekeren (2005), ethics can simply be defined as a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values and virtues of character that inform and guide interpersonal and intrapersonal conduct: that is, the conduct of people toward each other and the conduct of people toward themselves.

Ferrell and Fraedrich (1997) pointed out that ethical issues are problems, situations or opportunities that require a person or organization to choose among several actions that must be evaluated as right or wrong.

Gini (2004) considers that ethics is about the assessment and evaluation of values, because all of life is value-laden.

Three dominant theories in the ethics literature

Looking back through the history of the development of ethical theories, there are many different systems with various viewpoints. In this paper, the authors highlight three dominant theories that have been discussed most by ethics scholars.

Traditionally, there are two major types of theoretical ethical systems: Deontological ethics and Teleological (Utilitarianism) ethics. Table 1 compares these theories, their focus and representatives.

Table 1

Three ethical theories

Theory	Deontology	Teleology (Utilitarianism)
Focus	Duties, obligations, and principles; Doing what is “right”; No-harm Principle	Primarily focuses on consequences in determining moral rightness and wrongness; Doing what will maximize societal welfare; Beneficence Principle
Representative(s)	Kant I. (1724-1804)	Bentham, J. (1748-1832) & Mill J. S. (1806-1873)

Source: Bentham, J. 1982. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

Petrick, J. A. & Quinn, J.F. 1997. *Management Ethics, Integrity at Work*.

Dworkin, R. 1977. *Taking Rights Seriously*.

Michalos, A. C. 1995. *A Pragmatic Approach To Business Ethics*.

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Theories that emphasize the nature of the act are called deontological (from the Greek word for “duty”). These theories hold that something is inherently right or good about such acts as truth telling and promise keeping and inherently wrong or bad about such acts as lying and promise breaking (Pojman, 2002).

Focusing on duties, obligations and principles, deontologists base their decisions about what is right on broad abstract universal principles such as honesty, promise keeping, fairness, rights (to safety, privacy, etc.), justice and respect for people and property (Trevino and Katherine, 1999). This system is expressed as the No-Harm Principle (Michalos, 1995): one ought to act so that one’s actions tend not to harm anyone else. The basic moral objective of this approach is to carry out one’s duty irrespective of the consequence, or end, of any action (McEwan, 2001).

Teleological ethics focus primarily on consequences in determining moral rightness and wrongness (Pojman, 2002). Utilitarianism is considered as the dominant version of teleological ethics (Trevino & Katherine, 1999; Pojman, 2002). Michalos (1995) states that this system follows the Beneficence Principle: one ought to act so that one’s actions tend to impartially improve the quality of life. Utilitarianism leads one to do what is most likely to have the best consequences – to do that which will produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Pojman, 2002).

As Trevino and Katherine (1999) point out, a deontologist focuses on doing what is “right” (based on moral principles such as honesty), whereas a utilitarian focuses on the consequences and what would expectedly maximise societal welfare.

Pojman (2002) considers virtue-based ethical systems, sometimes called aretaic ethics, as the third theoretical ethical system. According to virtue-based ethics it is important not only to do the right thing, but also to have the requisite dispositions, motivations and emotions in being good and doing right. Obviously, the virtue ethics approach focuses more on the integrity of the moral actor than on the moral act itself (Trevino & Katherine, 1999). Fisher and Lovell (2003) argue that virtue ethics is not a system of rules, but rather a set of personal characteristics

that, if practiced, will ensure that the individual is likely to make the ‘right’ choice in any ethically complex situation.

Ethical relativism could be used to make distinction between these two ethical theories. Highly relativistic individuals prefer to believe that moral actions depend on the nature of the situation and universal moral principles could be rejected (Forsyth, 1992).

Ethics domains and scope

Ferrell and Fraedrich (1997) argue that most ethical issues can be classified into four categories: conflicts of interest, fairness and honesty, communications and organizational relationships. A conflict of interest exists when an individual must choose whether to advance his or her own interests, those of the organization or those of some other group. Honesty refers to truthfulness, integrity and trustworthiness; fairness is the quality of being just, equitable and impartial. Communication, which refers to the transmission of information and the sharing of meaning, can be ethically impaired by lying because it destroys trust. Organizational relationships refer to ethical aspects of the behaviour of organizational members toward customers, suppliers, subordinates, superiors, peers and others (Ferrell and Fraedrich, 1997).

According to Pojman (2002), most ethical analysis falls into one or a number of the following domains: action, consequences, character and motive. These domains can be better understood from the possible sates they can assume. Action could be described in the following evaluative terms: right, wrong, obligatory and optional. Consequences are either good or bad or indifferent. Character could be virtuous, vicious or neutral. The terms used to describe motives are good will, evil will and neutral.

Factors influencing ethical conduct

Previous studies indicate, that the institutional context has impact on organisational culture (Übüs & Alas 2009), on corporate social responsibility (Tafel-Viia & Alas, 2009; Übüs & Alas, 2009) and on employee attitudes toward changes (Alas et al 2009b). All these concepts are connected with values and ethics. Institutions are ‘social structures’ which contain cultural elements and provide ‘meaning to social life’ (Scott 1995). McHoskey (1996) highlights need to consider cultural differences as context for ethical considerations. Ethical conduct is influenced by both situational pushes and pulls and the characteristics of the individual that we will call individual differences (Trevino & Katherine, 1999).

When people behave ethically, they must, among other things, decide what course of action is morally right, and they must choose the morally right path over others (Rest, 1986).

Another individual characteristic that has been found to influence ethical conduct is locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Locus of control refers to an individual’s perception of how much control he or she exerts over events in life. It is not something a person is born with. It is developed over time through interaction with other people and the social environment (Trevino & Katherine, 1999).

Why ethics is necessary

In terms of the purpose of ethics, Pojman (2002) lists five statements to illustrate why ethics are necessary: (1) keep society from falling apart, (2) ameliorate human suffering, (3) promote human flourishing, (4) resolve conflicts of interest in just and orderly ways, and, (5) assign praise and blame, reward and punishment, and guilt.

National culture

Previous studies indicate impact of the national culture on managerial values (Alas et al (in press) and on management practices (Alas 2008 and Alas et al 2009a). Social scientists use the term culture to mark a set of parameters for collectives that differentiate each social group in a meaningful way. In the GLOBE study, culture is defined as shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences among members of collectives that are transmitted across generations (House & Javidan, 2004).

As one of the most comprehensive studies of national cultures, the GLOBE study provides worldwide, multiphase, multi-method cross-cultural research data. It involves 170 social scientists and management scholars from 62 cultures that represent all major regions of the world.

According to House & Javidan (2004), there are two distinct kinds of cultural manifestations – values and practices – and nine core cultural dimensions in the GLOBE project:

- *Uncertainty Avoidance* is the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices. People in high uncertainty avoidance cultures actively seek to decrease the probability of unpredictable future events that could adversely affect the operation of an organization or society and remedy the success of such adverse effects.

- *Power Distance* is the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government.

- *Institutional Collectivism* is the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.

- *In-Group Collectivism* is the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.

- *Gender Egalitarianism* is the degree to which an organization or society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality.

- *Assertiveness* is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in social relationships.

- *Future Orientation* is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviours such as planning, investing in the future and delaying individual or collective gratification.

- *Performance Orientation* is the degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

- *Humane Orientation* is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring and kind to others (ibid).

Studying and discovering the relationship between ethics and national culture may help people to apply appropriate ethical standards and adopt corresponding ethical understanding when dealing with ethical issues and handling ethical crises.

This brings the authors to the following research question: Is there some association between national culture and ethics. As culture is connected with norms people collectively follow, the deontological theories of ethics are most suitable for studying this research question. Therefore paper adopt a deontological approach by testing the absoluteness of “right” and “wrong” and the importance of the No-harm Principle.

Empirical Study

The aim of this empirical study was to identify how ethics is connected with differences in national culture. The research question is: Are there any connections between national culture and ethics? Three countries were selected for the investigation – Brazil, China and Estonia. These three countries are from 3 different continents: America, Asia, and Europe.

The sample

In 2008–2009, 356 questionnaires were answered in Brazil, China and Estonia. Among the entire sample 59 of the respondents were Brazilian, 236 were Chinese and 61 were Estonian. According to gender, 39.89% were male and 59.27% were female.

The respondents had a variety of work experience from a range of sectors. Of 356 respondents, 136 had 5 years work experience or more, 58 respondents had had between 1 and 5 years (inclusively), 17 respondents had less than 1 year, and 95 respondents had not worked yet. According to sectors, 55 respondents were from the public sector, 104 from the private sector, 47 had worked in both sectors, and 95 that had not worked yet could not indicate any sector.

It is worth noting that there are some missing percentages or numbers in some of the information sections. That is due to some respondents not providing certain information.

The Method

The method used to measure ethics was questionnaire developed by Schlenker & Forsyth (1977) and Forsyth (1980). The first part was designed to assess the respondent’s background information, such as gender, age, education level, and work experience. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of the Ethics Position Questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and Estonian languages to conduct the research in these countries. Retranslation was done back into English

to make sure that the translation was accurate. In Brazil an English questionnaire was passed out.

Each respondent answered the questionnaire independently and anonymously. The questionnaire contained 20 ethical statements. Each statement was followed by a 5-point-scale Likert-scale: 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree and 5 - strongly agree.

The EPQ consists of 20 items. Originally first 10 measure idealism and the last 10 measure relativism. In current study principal components analysis with VARIMAX rotation led to the identification of two dimensions, which were called Ethical Relativism (ER; Cronbach's alpha = .749) and No-Harm Principle (NH; Cronbach's alpha = .705). The first scale was formed from 5 questions, which in original questionnaire belonged also to ethical relativism scale and the second scale from 4 questions belonging to scale called ethical idealism. On current study the second scale is called No-Harm Principle, because authors find that this label illustrates the content of remained 4 items better.

Table 2

Rotated Component Matrix

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Does ethical vary from one situation and society to another	.756	
What one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person	.738	
Different types of morality cannot be treated in terms of "right" or "wrong" because what is moral depends on the situation	.707	
Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual	.616	
Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action	.568	
One should never psychologically or physically harm another person		.804
One should not perform an action that might threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual		.763
People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another person		.669
If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be performed		.659

Note: 1. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 2. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 3. A Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The first scale, *Ethical Relativism*, suggests that ethical variety exists in different situations and societies. What one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person, and different types of morality cannot be treated in terms of "right" or "wrong" because what is moral depends on situation.

The second scale, *No-Harm Principle*, suggests that one should never psychologically or physically harm another person, and one should not perform an action that might threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.

Results

The analysis begins with the comparison of the three countries. In order to find statistically significant differences an ANOVA test was used. The results are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

The results of both scales based on country difference

Country		Ethical Relativism	No-Harm Principle
Brazil N=59	Mean	4.112	3.522
	Std. Deviation	.796	.817
China N=236	Mean	4.113	3.613
	Std. Deviation	.615	.555
Estonia N=61	Mean	4.371	3.800
	Std. Deviation	.592	.800
Total	Mean	4.157	3.630
	Std. Deviation	.649	.655
	Sig.	.019	.052

Note: 1. Bold fonts indicate statistically significant differences ($p < .050$).
 2. Analysis was conducted via an ANOVA test.

For Ethical Relativism, a statistically significant difference between at least two countries was found ($F(2; 349) = 3.997, p = .019$). Ethics was most relative for Estonian respondents ($n = 61, \text{mean} = 4.371$), then for Chinese respondents ($n = 236, \text{mean} = 4.113$), and the least for Brazilian respondents ($n = 59, \text{mean} = 4.112$).

Statistically significant differences were not found in the No-Harm Principle scale ($F(2; 353) = 2.974, p = .052$). Estonian respondents ($m = 3.800$) were least likely to harm others, next came the Chinese respondents ($m = 3.613$), while the respondents from Brazil ($m = 3.522$) support the No-Harm Principle the least.

Both scales show the highest scores in Estonia, then in China and the lowest scores were in Brazil.

Connections between ethics scales according to cultural dimensions

In order to measure and analyse the respondents' answers, cultural practices and values data were used. The data about the country-level cultural dimensions in Appendix 1 are taken from the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004; Alas, 2006).

The Pearson Correlation analysis results in Appendix II indicate that a statistically significant correlation existed for scale 1, Ethical Relativism, ($p < .05, 2$ -tailed) in 6 core cultural dimensions of the Practices manifestation. Ethical Relativism was negatively related to In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Humane Orientation, and Performance Orientation. Ethical Relativism was positively correlated with Future Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism ($r = .116$). In the Values manifestation, statistically significant negative connections existed in 2 dimensions: In-Group Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance. Regarding the No-Harm Principle, there was one dimension with a statistically significant correlation in the cultural values – In-Group Collectivism was negatively correlated.

Figure 1 illustrates the cultural practices and Figure 2 cultural values in three countries.

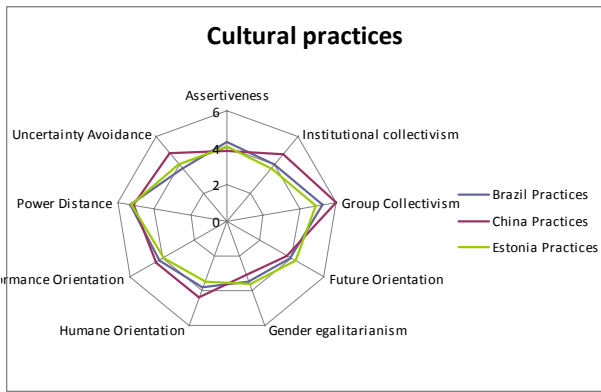


Figure 1. Cultural practices in three countries

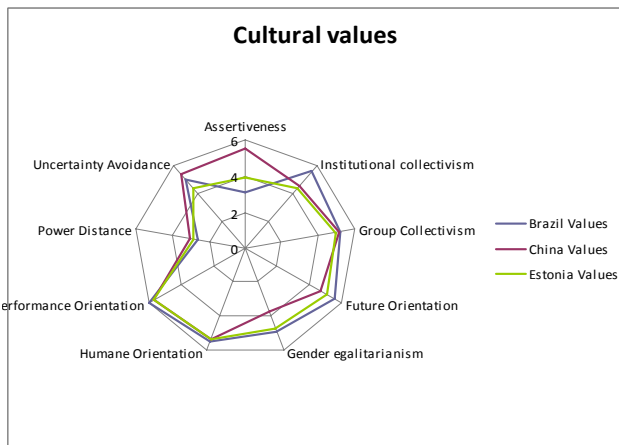


Figure 2. Cultural values in three countries

When comparing the four dimensions of practices, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation, which were negatively related to Ethical Relativism, China (4.67, 5.86, 4.29, 4.37) has the highest score in each dimension, Brazil (3.94, 5.16, 3.76, 4.11) the next highest and Estonia (3.71, 4.79, 3.39, 3.87) the lowest score. However, for the two dimensions, Future Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism, which were positively related to Ethical Relativism, Estonia (4.20, 3.60) has the highest score in each dimension, Brazil (3.90, 3.44) the next highest and China (3.68, 3.03) the lowest score.

In one of the two values dimensions, In-Group Collectivism, which was negatively related to Ethical Relativism, and was also the only dimension related to the No-Harm Principle (negatively related), Brazil (5.17) has the highest score in comparison with the other two countries – China (5.12) has the next highest and Estonia (4.95) the lowest. In one other values dimension, Uncertainty Avoidance, China (5.34) has the highest score, Brazil (5.00) the next highest and Estonia (4.31) the lowest.

Conclusions

The globalization of the economies of the world requires increased interaction between individuals from various cultures. The results of the current study indicate differences in ethics between countries. The comparison of countries indicates that Chinese and Brazilian respondents

tend to consider ethics to be less relative compared to Estonians. Estonians also find the No-Harm Principle more important than the people from other two countries.

According to current study the impact of national cultural was greater on Ethical Relativism, where six cultural practices and two cultural values seem to influence how people think about what is right and wrong. Concerning the No-Harm Principle, one should not psychologically or physically harm another person, nor perform an action which might threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual, only In-Group Collectivism as a value had any impact: societies where In-Group Collectivism was higher followed this principle less.

In Figure 3 the connections between Ethical Relativism and cultural dimensions are shown.

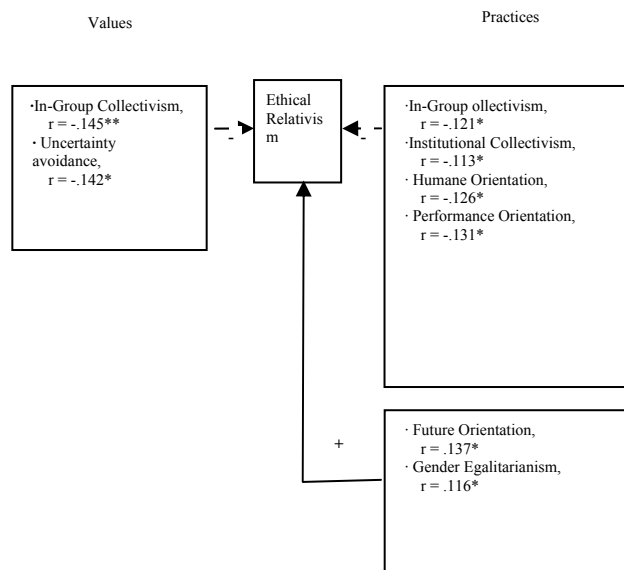


Figure 3. Connection between Ethical Relativism and Cultural Dimensions

- Note: 1. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
- 2. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
- 3. The analysis was conducted via the Pearson Correlation test, N=352.

The model illustrates that on the societal level, actual cultural practices have more impact on ethics than cultural values. Ethical Relativism was related to national cultures, and especially to cultural practices. In societies with higher In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation in cultural practices, ethics is less relative. At the same time, members of societies with higher Future Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism in cultural practices put more emphasis on situational factors when deciding what is right and what is wrong.

When looking at cultural values, only In-Group Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance had any impact on ethics. In societies with higher In-Group Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance, Ethical Relativism was found to be less related to cultural values.

The opposite of Ethical Relativism or ethics that depend on circumstances, is absolute ethics. This means that what is right and wrong is clearly stated, and “wrong” behaviour is punished despite situational factors that might make the punishment lighter.

Some connections could be drawn to previous studies. High In-Group Collectivism and Institutional Collectivism, which showed less Ethical Relativism in current study, indicated higher importance of ethics in study conducted in 12 countries (Alas, 2006). Therefore it could be assumed, that people who score lower in Ethical Relativism find ethics more important than those who score higher in Ethical Relativism. But there are also some contrasting results: Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation showed also less Ethical Relativism, but indicated lower importance of ethics in 12 countries study (Alas, 2006). At the same time deeper analysis in 12 countries study showed that the group with higher desire for ethics showed positive connection between this desire for ethics and two cultural dimensions: Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation (Alas, 2006).

Although current study does not clarify the contradictory results from previous studies, our findings could be the bases for developing propositions of future studies in different institutional environments. To conduct this research in other countries might help to test additionally the connections between Ethics and Cultural dimensions. Moreover, testing the model with larger populations in the same countries could help to obtain more information about the relationship between ethics and cultural dimensions in groups with different demographic characteristics. Bigger samples from more countries could enable to consider more contextual factors.

To conclude, some connections between national culture and ethics were found. Paying attention to the following cultural dimensions when doing business in different cultures could be useful: In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Humane Orientation, Performance Orientation, Future Orientation and Gender Egalitarianism.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Brazil	Practices	4,25	3,94	5,16	3,90	3,44	3,76	4,11	5,24	3,74
	Values	3,06	5,57	5,17	5,60	4,91	5,52	5,98	2,59	5,00
China	Practices	3,77	4,67	5,86	3,68	3,03	4,29	4,37	5,02	4,81
	Values	5,52	4,52	5,12	4,70	3,73	5,34	5,72	3,01	5,34
Estonia	Practices	4,04	3,71	4,79	4,20	3,60	3,39	3,87	5,16	4,01
	Values	3,90	4,33	4,95	5,04	4,73	5,36	5,68	2,87	4,31

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- 1 – Assertiveness
- 2 – Institutional Collectivism
- 3 – In-Group Collectivism
- 4 - Future Orientation
- 5 - Gender Egalitarianism
- 6 - Humane Orientation
- 7 - Performance Orientation
- 8 - Power Distance
- 9 - Uncertainty Avoidance

Source: House, R.J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W., and Gupta, V. ed. 2004. *Culture, Leadership, and organizations, The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*.
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Appendix II-A. Correlations between cultural practices and ethics dimensions

Cultural Practices	Ethical Relativism	No-Harm Principle
Assertiveness	.053	-.006
Institutional Collectivism	-.113*	-.056
In-Group Collectivism	-.121*	-.066
Future Orientation	.137*	.088
Gender Egalitarianism	.116*	.060
Humane Orientation	-.126*	-.072
Performance Orientation	-.131*	-.079
Power Distance	.062	.003
Uncertainty Avoidance	-.075	-.014

Note: N=356

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix II-B. Correlations between cultural values and ethics dimensions

Cultural Values	Ethical Relativism	No-Harm Principle
Assertiveness	-.065	-.005
Institutional Collectivism	-.055	-.090
In-Group Collectivism	-.145**	-.127*
Future Orientation	.028	-.028
Gender Egalitarianism	.084	.024
Humane Orientation	-.014	-.061
Performance Orientation	-.052	-.088
Power Distance	-.021	.034
Uncertainty Avoidance	-.142*	-.096

Note: N=356

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Santykis tarp etikos ir kultūros dimensijų

Santrauka

Kai globalios ekonomikos susilieja ir vis daugiau organizacijų bendradarbiauja su savo partneriais ir konkurentais, tampa labai svarbu suprasti įvairias kultūros vertybes, tradicijas, įsitikinimus, kurie valdo atskirų individų elgseną. Etinių problemų paprastai kyla dėl konfliktų tarp individų moralės filosofijų ir vertybių, taip pat tarp organizacijų vertybių jų darbe, visuomenės, kurioje jos funkcionuoja (Ferell ir Fraedrich, 1997). Norint sėkmingai spręsti šiuos konfliktus, žmonės, ypač aukštesnio lygio vadybininkai, turi sukurti atitinkamos organizacijos etikos koncepcija bei standartus ir tinkamai juos taikyti ir numatyti rezultatus.

Šio straipsnio tikslai – svarbiausia suprasti etiką, padėti žmonėms sėkmingai spręsti etikos konfliktus ir vengti su etika susijusių krizių arba jas tiesiog spręsti. Atliekant tyrimą sprendžiamas šis klausimas: ar yra sąsajų tarp nacionalinės kultūros ir etikos? Straipsnyje taikoma deontologinis požiūris

testuojant „teisingi“ ir „klaidingo“ absoliutumą ir „be žalos“ principą (Pojman, 2002). 2008–2009 m. tyrimui buvo parinktos trys šalys – Brazilija, Kinija ir Estija, ir buvo parengtos 356 anketos. Šios trys šalys yra skirtingų kultūrų grupių. Buvo sukurta metodika, kaip įvertinti etinį reliatyvizmą ir „be žalos“ principą.

Šiame straipsnyje terminas „etika“ susijęs su verslo etika ir socialine etika. Straipsnis pradamas teoriniais teiginiais, įskaitant etikos apibrėžimus, pateikiamos etikos sistemos, aiškinami etikos konfliktai ir analizuojami veiksniai, kurie veikia etiką. Po teorinės dalies eina empirinių tyrimų analizė, atlikta Brazilijoje, Kinijoje ir Estijoje. Duomenims apdoroti taikoma lyginamoji analizė (ANOVA testas ir Pirsono koreliacijos analizė).

Anketa buvo išversta į kinų ir estų kalbas. Kiekvienas respondentas atsakė klausimyną anonimiškai. Anketoje buvo 20 etikos teiginių. Kiekvienas teiginys buvo vertinamas 5 balų sistema.

Pagrindinių sudedamųjų dalių analizė leido nustatyti dvi dimensijas, kurios buvo pavadintos etiniu reliatyvizmu ir „be žalos“ principu. Remiantis pirmąja skale – etiniu reliatyvizmu, – etinė įvairovė egzistuoja įvairiose situacijose ir bendrijose. Tai, ką vienas asmuo laiko moraliu gali būti kito asmens laikoma amoraliu. Įvairūs moralės tipai negali būti vertinami kaip „teisingas“ arba „klaidingas“, nes moralumo laipsnis priklauso nuo situacijos.

Remiantis antrąja skale – be „žalos“ principu, joks asmuo negali kenkti psichologiškai arba fiziškai kitam asmeniui ir negalima imtis veiksmų, kurie galėtų grėsti kito individo gerovei ir orumui.

Rezultatų analizė rodo, kad etika yra labiau būdinga estų respondentams nei kinams ir mažiausiai brazilams. Estijos respondentai mažiausiai linkę kenkti kitiems, po to – kiniečių respondentai. Brazilijos respondentai į tai dėmesį kreipia mažiausiai.

Vertinant ir analizuojant respondentų atsakymus, buvo panaudoti vertybių ir kultūros patyrimo duomenys. Duomenys apie šalių kultūrinės dimensijas buvo paimti iš studijos GLOBE (House, 2004; Alas, 2006).

Pirsono koreliacijos analizės rezultatai rodo, kad etiniame reliatyvizme statistiškai reikšminga koreliacija egzistavo. Pastarasis buvo neigiamai susijęs su grupės kolektyvizmu, institucijos kolektyvizmu, žmogiškąja orientacija ir veiklos orientacija. Etninis reliatyvizmas buvo teigiamai koreliuojamas su ateities orientacija ir giminės egalitarizmu. Vertybėse statistiškai svarbios neigiamos sąsajos išryškėjo grupės kolektyvizmo procese ir netikrumo vengimo procese. Atsižvelgiant į „be žalos“ principą, su statistiškai reikšminga koreliacija kultūros vertybėse buvo vien dimensija – grupinis kolektyvizmas buvo neigiamai koreliuojamas. Keturiuos praktinės dimensijos (grupės kolektyvizmas, žmogiškoji orientacija ir veiklos orientacija) buvo neigiamai susijusios su etiniu reliatyvizmu. Kinijos kiekvienos dimensijos įvertinimas aukščiausias (4,67; 5,86; 4,29; 4,37), po to Brazilijos (3,94; 5,16; 3,76; 4,11), žemiausias rezultatas – Estijos (3,71; 4,79; 3,39; 3,87). Tačiau dvi dimensijos (ateities orientacija ir giminės lygybė), kurios buvo teigiamai susijusios su etiniu reliatyvizmu, rodo, kad Estijos rezultatas aukščiausias (4,20; 3,60), po to – Brazilijos (3,90; 3,44) ir Kinijos (3,68; 3,03).

Brazilijos grupės kolektyvizmo dimensijos, kuri buvo neigiamai susijusi su etiniu reliatyvizmu ir buvo vienintelė dimensija, susijusi su „be žalos“ principu, įvertinimas aukščiausias – 5,17, palyginti su kitomis dviem šalimis (Kinijos – 5,12, Estijos – 4,95). Kinijos netikrumo vengimo dimensijos įvertinimas aukščiausias – 5,34, Brazilijos – 5,00, Estijos – 4,31.

Kad vyktų pasaulio ekonomikų globalizacija, reikalinga daugiau bendradarbiauti įvairių kultūrų individams. Šio tyrimo rezultatai parodo skirtumus tarp šalių etikos srityje. Šalių palyginimas rodo, kad Kinijos ir Brazilijos respondentų manymu, etika mažiau susijusi su pasauliniais procesais. Estų nuomone, „be žalos“ principas svarbesnis, nei mano kitos šalys.

Tautinės kultūros poveikis buvo didesnis etiniam reliatyvizmui, – šeši kultūros aspektai ir dvi kultūros vertybės veikė žmonių mąstymą apie tai, kas yra teisinga, o kas klaidinga. Kalbant apie „be žalos“ principą, svarbi nuostata, kad asmuo psichologiškai arba fiziškai nedarytų žalos kitam asmeniui arba kad nesimtų veiksmo, kuris keltų grėsmę kito asmens orumui ir gerovei. Grupės kolektyvizmo atveju šio principo laikomasi.

Esant antram lygiui ryšys tarp etinio reliatyvizmo ir kultūros dimensijų yra tas, kad etiką labiau veikia tikra kultūros praktika nei kultūros vertybės. Etninis reliatyvizmas buvo susijęs su nacionaline kultūra ir ypač su kultūros praktika. Visuomenėse, kur yra aukštesnis grupės kolektyvizmas, institucijos kolektyvizmas, žmogiškoji orientacija ir veiklos orientacija kultūrinėje veikloje, etika yra mažiau susijusi. Visuomenės, kuriose yra su aukštesne ateities orientacija ir lyčių lygybe, nariai pabrėžia situacijos faktorius sprendžiant, kas yra teisinga, o kas ne.

Žvelgiant į kultūros vertybes, grupės kolektyvizmas ir netikrumo vengimas veikia etiką. Visuomenėse, kuriose yra aukštesnis grupės kolektyvizmas ir vengiama netikrumo, etinis reliatyvizmas yra mažiau susijęs su kultūros vertybėmis.

Absoliučioji etika yra priešingybė etiniam reliatyvizmui arba etikai, kuri priklauso nuo aplinkybių. Tai reiškia, kad tai, kas yra teisinga ir neteisinga, yra aiškiai įvardijama, o „blogas“ elgesys yra baudžiamas nepaisant situacijos veiksnių, kurie galėtų sumažinti bausmę.

Nors šie tyrimai neprieštaruja ankstesnių tyrimų rezultatams, jie galėtų tapti pagrindu tolesnėms studijoms skirtingose institucijų aplinkose. Tyrimai kitose šalyse padėtų papildomai nustatyti santykį tarp etikos ir kultūros dimensijų. Be to, bandant analizuoti šį modelį su daugiau respondentų tose pačiose šalyse galima būtų gauti daugiau informacijos apie santykį tarp etikos ir kultūros aspektų įvairiose demografinėse grupėse. Daugiau įvairių šalių pavyzdžių padėtų įvertinti daugiau kontekstualių veiksnių.

Buvo nustatyta priklausomybė tarp nacionalinės kultūros ir etikos, taip pat svarbios kultūros dimensijos verslui įvairiose šalyse vystytis: grupės kolektyvizmas, institucinis kolektyvizmas, žmogiškoji orientacija, veiklos orientacija, ateities orientacija ir lyčių lygybė.

Raktažodžiai: *etika, kultūra, kultūrinės vertybės, Estija, Kinija, Brazilija.*

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