ORIGINAL PAPER

APPLICATION OF THE 6D HOFSTEDE MODEL IN AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH AND PORTUGUESE BUSINESS CULTURE

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A b s t r a c t

Business management in a culturally diverse environment, that is acting in different business cultures, is one of the major challenges facing managers nowadays. Cultural differences among societies have been known to exist for ages, but a holistic view of their impact on the business culture in particular countries, development of cultural typologies and studies into the nature of interactions between the business and organisational culture date back to the 1980s. The acceleration of social, technological and demographic changes, a more rapid process of globalisation as well as some disturbances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine or the intensifying rivalry between China and the United States of America, increase organisational uncertainty. Such changes require a new cultural sensitivity as well as new, modified systems of values. The objective of this

study has been to determine and compare the Polish and Portuguese business cultures. To this end, the contemporary Polish and Portuguese business cultures have been analysed according to the 6D Hofstede model.

WYKORZYSTANIE MODELU 6D HOFSTEDE W ANALIZIE POLSKIEJ I PORTUGALSKIEJ KULTURY BIZNESOWEJ

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A b s t r a k t

Zarządzanie w zróżnicowanym kulturowym środowisku, działanie w różnych kulturach biznesowych to jedno z głównych wyznań współczesnych menadżerów. Samo zjawisko różnic w kulturach społeczeństw jest znane od wieków, jednak holistyczne spojrzenie na jej wpływ na kulturę biznesową poszczególnych krajów, stworzenie typologii kulturowych, badanie charakteru interakcji między kulturą biznesową a organizacyjną datuje się dopiero na drugą połowę lat osiemdziesiątych XX wieku. Przyspieszenie zmian społecznych, technologicznych, demograficznych, proces globalizacji, ale również jego zakłócenia w postaci pandemii COVID-19, wojny na Ukrainie, czy zaostrzająca się rywalizacja między Chinami a Stanami Zjednoczonymi Ameryki Północnej, powodują zwiększenie niepewności organizacyjnej. Zmiany te wymagają nowej wrażliwości kulturowej, często nowych, zmodyfikowanych systemów wartości. Celem opracowania jest określenie i porównanie polskich i portugalskich kultur biznesowych. Aby osiągnąć ten cel, współczesne polskie i portugalskie kultury biznesowe przeanalizowano według modelu 6D Hofstede.

Introduction

The 21st century is called a century of discontinuity. The number, depth, frequency and unpredictability of changes in all areas of human activity have rendered the traditional solutions used in management practice insufficient (Niedzielski, 2019, p. 160). The need to face new challenges as well as social, economic and technological changes means that the key factor in development or

even survival consists of the systems of values adopted by organisations. Hofstede, a Dutch scholar, spoke even about the programming of the human mind. Owing to the socialisation process, as an element of many social groups and infinitely intricate interactions man creates own operational system (Sent & Kroese, 2022, p. 17). This system helps people to act as it enables everyone to undertake effective and efficient action by providing ready schemes of action, stereotypical reactions and assessments. The degree to which this system is adjusted to the requirements of the contemporary world allows for more or less effective activities carried out by individuals, groups or organisations. The relevant literature contains many classifications and models of culture, which enable us to gain a better insight into the complex world of values and their influence on behaviour on all levels of an organisation (Siemiński, 2020, p. 13-17).

Organisational Culture

The importance of business organisational culture was first acknowledged in the early 1950s. In industrial companies, it served to explain the causes underlying a low-productivity environment, and why certain rules and procedures failed to improve unhealthy relationships between superiors and subordinates (Kassem, Ajmal, Gunasekaran & Helo, 2018, p. 119). Organisational culture is an interdisciplinary concept, which lacks one uniform definition, model or approach. The main reason is the high interdisciplinarity of the research, to which anthropology, psychology, sociology or management sciences have made a considerable contribution. However, what all definitions share is that organisational culture is defined through interactions of its members (Soni, Jhajharia & Nag, 2022, p. 7032). The term 'culture' in relation to an organisation was first used in 1951 by Jaques, who defined it as a customary and traditional way of thinking and acting, shared to various degrees by all members of the organisation and which new members of the organisation will have to learn and at least partly accept so as to be embraced by the organisation (Schlemendson, 2005, p. 346). Schein, a classic culture scholar and the creator of its best-known model, understood organisational culture as a set of procedures, a template of basic assumptions, which has been created, discovered or further developed by a group through mutual interactions and a learning process, in order to deal with problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 2004, p. 17). It is possible to encounter the concept that corporate culture is a type of a company's identity, reflection of human predispositions, ways of thinking and acting in a company. It influences man's consciousness and subconsciousness, and manifests in both these spheres (Lorincova, Miklasik & Hitka, 2021, s. 221).

There are three main taxonomic approaches to organisational culture presented in the literature: the dimensions approach; interrelated structure approach; and typology approaches. The dimensions approach is characterised

by using scales. Relating culture to other constructs or features of an organisation and, to a lesser degree, to single variables is typical of the interrelated structure approach. Typological approaches are based on predefined key features, which divide organisations into certain categories (Dauber, Fink & Yolles, 2012, p. 2, 3).

One of the classifications most often referred to is that proposed by Hofstede (2001). In the early stage of his research, Hofstede proposed a four-dimensional model described by levels: 1) power distance, 2) individualism, 3) masculinity, and 4) uncertainty avoidance. During later studies, the model was expanded by adding such dimensions as 5) long-term orientation, and 6) indulgence (Honrado, 2020, p. 68; Lee, Chernikov, Nagy & Degtereva, 2022, p. 2; Heydari, Laroche, Paulin & Richard, 2021, p. 2). Hofstede's work has long been 'considered a reliable proxy by numerous researchers in numerous fields' (Pikhart & Koblizkovam 2017, p. 4). Although this model was created to describe national cultures, it can be successfully applied in descriptions of organisational cultures (Czerska, 2016, p. 188, 189).

6D Hofstede Model Treated

Power distance is defined as the extent to which less influential members (subordinates) of an organisation expect and accept the unequal distribution of power. This dimension characterises the approach of an organisation to inequality (Saha & Nanda, 2022, p. 10663). In cultures with high power distance, inequality is as something obvious, arising from the nature of life. Employees have little discretion. Power is the source of prestige and is superior to ethics (Pukin, 2020, p. 167). In cultures with low power distance, it is thought that people should be equal and hierarchy is the inequality of roles but not of people. Subordinates and managers work hand in hand. Power relies of legality, should be ethical and is subject to scrutiny (Adanivic, 2022, p. 3).

Conceptually, individualism as a dimension describing relationships between an individual and the community (Hofstede, 2001, p. 209), particularly the extent to which people are independent decision-making individuals or to which they are embedded in their groups (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012, p. 499). In collective cultures, people perceive themselves as closely connected with their internal group, tend to adopt the norms and responsibilities dominant in the group as guidelines, and attach much value to their relationships with other members of the group (Siemiński, Wędrowska & Krukowski, 2020, p. 72, 73). Individualistic cultures replace the dependence of an individual on particular support groups, especially family and friends, with a more anonymous form of dependence on impartial institutions and universal norms. Inter-community bonds and responsibilities persist, but they are chosen rather than imposed (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018, p. 1481).

The dimension denoting masculinity refers to the stereotypical approach to gender. It specifies whether a society presents more masculine features, such as competitiveness and assertiveness, rivalry, struggle, etc., or more feminine ones, such as modesty, support, empathy or care for others (Su, 2022, p. 58). In masculine cultures, main decisions are usually made at the top of an organisation and employees are not actively engaged in management due to frequent job changes and the lack of identification with the organisation. In cultures where more importance is attached to feminine values, labour policy is more family friendly, and balance between professional and family duties is maintained (Sun, Kim & Zhao, 2022, p. 9).

Uncertainty is an unavoidable part of everyday life. All cultures try to control uncertainty with the help of technology, beliefs, rules and rituals, arriving over time at different mechanisms to deal with uncertainty. In some organisations, uncertainty evokes anxiety and organisation members tend to avoid it. In such cultures, people try to keep uncertainty away as far as possible. Conversely, in organisations with the low level of uncertainty avoidance, members readily accept uncertainty, approach risk and differences with curiosity, do not mind ambiguity and are flexible in terms of change and novelty (Küçükkomürler, Özkan, 2022, p. 90). Uncertainty avoidance is seen as being in an ambiguous situation, in which an individual may feel threatened and consequently will prefer to have firm rules and order of things in place. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, there will be more rules and regulations, which will result in less propensity for change and innovation. People tend to feel greater anxiety, and to occupy the positions in which there is less ambiguity (Escandon-Barbosa, Salas-Paramo & Rialp-Criado, 2021, p. 6, 7).

Long-term and short-term orientations relate to changes. A culture with long-term orientation focuses on the future and is pragmatic, whereas a culture with short-term orientation focuses on the past and present time, and is dominated by respecting tradition and maintaining social norms (Lee, Chernikov, Nagy & Degtereva, 2022, p. 3). In a short-term orientation culture, the world is basically the same as it was created, hence the past is a moral compass and preserving the past is morally good (Sienkiewicz, 2022, p. 531). Long-term orientation is connected with perseverance, ordering relationships according to their status and preserving this order, thriftiness, having a sense of shame, etc. (Alipour, 2021, p. 737).

An indulgent culture allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires associated with life and play. Restraint, on the other hand, is associated with control, and gratification of needs regulated through strict social norms (Heydari, Laroche, Paulin & Richard, 2021, p. 2). Organisations displaying characteristics of indulgent culture are short-term oriented, relatively more spontaneous in terms of expenses, have less control over gratification and less self-control, and do not emphasise thriftiness. In turn, cultures distinguished by restraint display behaviours limited by strict social rules and norms, which

members of the society feel obliged to obey (Chudnovskaya & O'Hara, 2022, p. 45). Over this continuum, cultural orientations range from the 'preventive closure' mentality, associated with uniformity, discipline, hierarchy and authority, to the mentality of 'promoting openness', which emphasises the search for opportunities, diversity, creativity, autonomy and liberty (Alipour & Yaprak, 2022, p. 3).

Hofstede's Model Applied: Poland vs. Portugal

For making a diagnosis and analysis of the Polish and Portuguese business cultures, presented in this article, the authors applied a comparative tool available on the website Hofstede Insights (Country Comparison. 2022). According to Mihuṭ and Lungescu, results shown on the Hofstede Insights website are estimates and do not result from any field studies (Mihuṭ & Lungescu, 2006, p. 6). In 2005, the Gallup Organization Romania implemented the Hofstede methodology and instrument in order to detect meaningful differences in the diagnosis. The cited authors developed a new tool composed of 42 new items to analyse the five dimensions but with a different methodology. Their results verified the estimates made by Hofstede (Iliescu, 2019, p. 243). Likewise, studies carried out in Poland on micro, small and medium enterprises yielded similar results (Siemiński, 2020, p. 122-139).
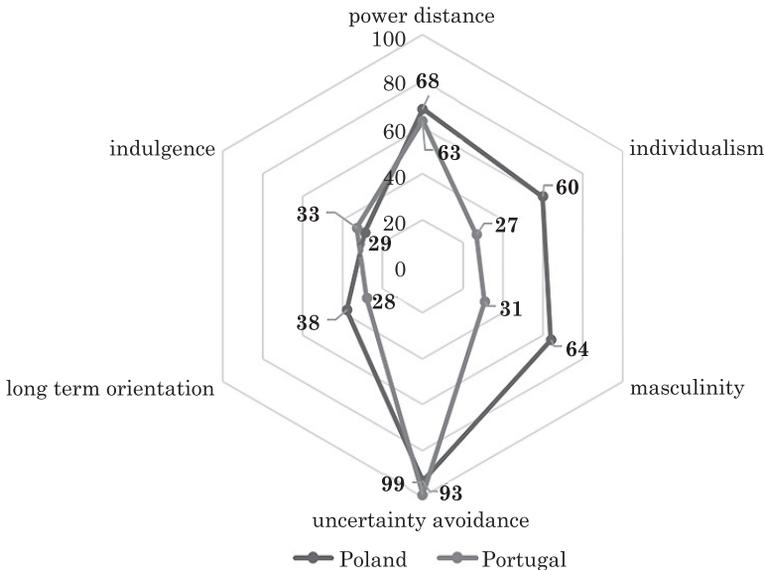

Fig. 1. Comparison culture profile Poland vs Portugal
Source: based on data from Country Comparison (2022).

Power distance reflects the attitude of a given culture to the fact that all individuals in the society are not equal. This dimension measures the extent to which less powerful members of a given community accept such inequality. The extent of acceptance of inequalities in the distribution of power is higher in the Polish society (68) than in the Portuguese one (63). Consequently, we can expect a higher degree of acceptance of solutions based on hierarchy in Polish organisations, and centralisation of power is likely to be more common. Managers tend to assume an autocratic style of management and to resist anything that might harm their managerial authority. Power is seen as the reflection of inherent inequalities and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat. It is expected in organisations that subordinates will report to their superiors their professional plans and will be subjected to control. In both cultures, power distance is underlined symbolically, and persons occupying key positions have access to privileges related to their position in the organisation.

Individualism is measured by the strength of independence of an individual, and it is reflected in organisations by the extent to which employees are willing to fight for the primacy of their own interests at the expense of the group. Individualism is sometimes presented as primary orientation towards oneself. Comparing the cultures diagnosed in Poland and in Portugal in terms of this dimension, distinct differences can be observed. The Polish society scores quite high on this dimension (68), which indicates that one cannot expect great loyalty of employees to their organisation or group. If an employee finds a better offer on the job market, they will take advantage of it. The employer-employee relationship is a contract based on mutual benefits, and management is the management of individuals. The dominant values in the system are first and foremost the personality of an individual, hence people have the right to criticise co-workers and the management. Managers in this culture, particularly in combination with high power distance, strive towards building a personal system of communication with subordinates, which enables them to create an impression that 'everybody is important in the organisation, although they are unequal'. The situation in Portuguese organisations is different. The low score on individualism (27) means that loyalty is paramount. Loyalty dominates the system of values, in which an individual is primarily a part of a group and secondly a personality. Employees are focused on attaining collective goals and collective success. The society supports strong relationships, where everyone feels responsible for other members of his or her group. The employer-employee relationships are seen in the light of moral categories, are long-term commitments, and decisions concerning an employee take into account his or her in-group performance. Relationships in companies are often like those in a family. The low individualism score means that people in Portugal may not accept changes very well.

The score on the masculinity dimension indicates to what extent the society is driven by competition, achievement and success. The diagnosis suggests that

there are large differences between the two analysed cultures in this area. The masculinity index for Poland was high (64). It can therefore be expected that the society will be driven by competition and success will be defined by the winner. Whatever is not permitted in the society is forbidden and illegal, yet breaching the law is common and legal nihilism is typical. In cultures with high scores on this dimension, people live to work and conflicts are solved by fighting. The low score on masculinity obtained by Portugal (31) means that the dominant value in that society is taking care of others and of the quality of life, while the key word is consensus. People in an organisation value equality, solidarity and quality in professional life. Free time and flexibility are favoured incentives. A successful manager is a supportive one, and decisions are made through involvement.

The dimension measuring uncertainty avoidance is connected to the way in which representatives of a given culture deal with anxiety and unknown situations in the future. Poland (93) and Portugal (99) both score very high on this dimension, which means that they both maintain rigid codes of beliefs and behaviour. Both value punctuality and security, and may resist innovation. In both countries, there is an emotional need for following rules, even if they do not work. The key element for individual motivation is security. Research has demonstrated that a fear of losing a job or the position in an organisation or going bankrupt are strong barriers for individuals to starting the process of implementation of changes (Esteves, Pastor & Carvalho, 2003, p. 151; Kozłowski, 2020, p. 210-212).

Long-term orientation describes the way in which the society maintains relations with the past while simultaneously facing challenges of the present and future time. The low value of this index for Poland (38) and Portugal (28) indicates that both societies are normative rather than pragmatic. It should be expected that behaviours will exhibit great respect to tradition, and a relatively little propensity to save for the future. The identified values of this index prove the preponderance of striving for quick results and strong inclination towards consumption rather than accumulation.

The extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, according to the culture in which they grew up, is referred to as indulgence. Indulgent cultures are characterised by relatively weak control, whereas restraint ones will demonstrate strong control. Both Poland and Portugal are dominated by characteristics associated with restraint. The societies are therefore distinguished by restraining the needs and regulating them with strict social norms. It is possible to observe a tendency towards cynicism and pessimism. The society is dominated by the sense of their actions being limited by social norms, and it appears improper to indulge in one's desires.

Conclusions

Organisational culture determines the way individuals, groups and eventually organisations act. The knowledge of dominant features of a business culture allows one to achieve a better adjustment of the management solutions used, and in consequence to ensure the coherence with the requirements of the environment, thus enabling the attainment of the organisation's goals. This is particularly important whenever cultural differences emerge, as these are a challenge to managers. The programming of the mind, stereotypical behaviours, decodification of cultural templates and symbols contrary to their original meaning, can become a cause of organisational conflicts, characterised by great strength, intensity and dynamics of impact.

The analysis and comparison of the Polish and Portuguese business culture, based on the cultural dimensions contained in the Hofstede classification, led to the following conclusions. In terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and the extent to which indulgence is controlled, the two cultures are similar. In both business cultures, similar behaviours, responses, and dominant values can be expected in these areas. The study shows that there are some intercultural differences between the Polish and Portuguese business cultures in the dimensions of individualism and masculinity.

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