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The Effects of Culture on the Leadership Style in Georgia

Nino TKESHELASHVILI

Abstract

Differences in leadership styles do exist across cultures and nationalities as revealed in the literature on culture and culture's influence on the leadership processes. Leadership style plays an important role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of the members of an organization. This research attempts to investigate the culture dimensions of Georgia and their effect on the dominating leadership style in this country. The research was based on Implicit Leadership Theory. It consists of interviews, literature review, participant and unobtrusive observations, and questionnaire-based data collection. Quantitative data were collected from a total of 160 employees of different organizations and profession. Correlation analysis was done to find out relationship between culture and leadership dimensions of Georgia. The results indicate that the Georgians view their society as high in In-group Collectivism, Assertiveness, and Power Distance cultural dimensions. These results make Georgia close to Easter European countries cluster according to the GLOBE study. Employees observe the dominant leadership style in Georgia as Middle-of-the-road Leadership though according to culture dimensions results it should be close to Authority-Compliance Leadership. Correlation analysis revealed that high In-group Collectivism culture dimension is more influential in workplaces than high Assertiveness and Power distance culture dimensions. Because of this effect Employee Orientation variable is higher than was expected.

Keywords: *Culture, Leadership, Culture dimensions, Leadership behavior, Production Orientation, Employee Orientation*

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Introduction

Leadership is the ability to influence others to pursue common goals. Evidence suggests that leadership is present in all cultures. However, what does appear to differ from country to country is the type of leadership that is most effective. These differences can be partially explained by differences in assumptions and values across cultures.

Leadership is a process involving social interaction, and like all such processes, the question of what leadership styles and behaviors are dominated must be understood within the social context. The leadership style and other social behavior are influenced by the dimensions of the culture in which the behavior occurs. Leadership attributes are, in part, culturally determined. Of course national culture is not the only determinant of leadership behavior. The organization enforces its own practices. Individuals have their own personality, which they draw upon in all circumstances; and the larger social and political environment enforces its own rules on the workplace. All of these, as well as professional and generational differences, must be taken into consideration when considering influences on leadership behavior in the workplace.

Leadership and culture are said to be ever-enveloping paradigms informing each other. As one is expressed and the other is impacted in a looped cause and effect fashion. In fact, "Leadership drives culture. Culture drives leadership. They both drive performance."

Research Question: This research investigates the culture dimensions of Georgia and their effect on the dominating leadership style in this country.

Learning Objectives:

- To measure and classify culture dimensions of Georgia.
- To identify and measure two leadership behavior dimensions (Production Orientation and Employee Orientation) in Georgia.
- Based on Blake and Mouton's Leadership Grid and data analysis to identify dominant leadership style in Georgia.
- To find if there is correlation between high-scored culture dimensions and dominant leadership style in Georgia.

Literature Review

Leadership and Culture

The literature on the relationship between cultural context and leadership consists of two different levels of analysis: 1) the relationship between organizational culture and leadership, and 2) the relationship between national culture and leadership. The two streams of research are almost mutually exclusive with little theoretical or empirical linkage.

Very few well conducted empirical or conceptual studies of the relationship between organizational culture and relationship have appeared in the literature. Several writers have suggested that leaders shape organizational cultures (Peters and Waterman, 1980; Smirsich, 1983; Nicholls, 1988; Quick, 1992; Simms, 1997). Bass (1985) suggested that transactional leaders work within the framework of the organizational culture while transformational leaders transform it. In a study of The U.S. Civil Service, Hennessy (1998) concluded that leadership played a critical role in reshaping the culture of the organization.

Another stream of thought on the relationship between leadership and organizational culture was proposed by Schein (1992) who argued that organizational life cycle is a key determinant of the connection between leadership and organizational culture. He suggested that in the early part of the life cycle, leaders play a major role in shaping the culture of the organization but over time, as the organization gains more maturity its culture influences the actions and behaviors of its leaders. Bass and Avolio (1993) support the dynamic notion of this relationship and view it as an ongoing interplay where the direction of influence is determined by the maturity of the organization.

The above literature is intuitively appealing and is almost taken for granted and lacks empirical scrutiny. There is scant empirical evidence on the relationship between organizational culture and leadership. Ogbanna and Harris (2000) are among the few researchers who have conducted a large scale study of this issue and they found that leadership styles are associated with organizational culture. More recently, GLOBE researchers provided empirical evidence that both organizational and societal cultural values are predictive of specific global leadership dimensions. For example, they showed that future orientation at both the national and

organizational level is negatively associated with autonomous leadership.

The second level of analysis relates to the relationship between national culture and leadership. Given the fact that individuals and groups with diverse cultural backgrounds are increasingly working together in the business world, scholars and practitioners have been keen to understand the implications of national culture for a variety of managerial and organizational issues including leadership.

There is general agreement among researchers that national culture refers to cognitive systems and behavioral repertoires that are shaped as a result of individuals' common experiences (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Leung, Bond, Reimel de Carrasquel, et al., 2002; Smith, Peterson, Schwartz, et al., 2002; Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, et al., 2005; Leung and Bond, 2006). Various authors have suggested that such cognitive systems and behavioral repertoires can impact leadership in a variety of ways (Chong & Thomas, 1997; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1998; Adler, 1997; House, et al., 1997; House et al., 2004; Javidan and Carl, 2004; Dorfman, 2004; Javidan and Carl, 2005; Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Lugue, and House 2006). Leaders are socialized into and internalize the cultural values and practices of the culture they grow up in. They learn, over time, desirable and undesirable modes of behavior. Smith, Peterson, and Schwartz (2002) showed that the extent that managers relied on formal rules and supervisors for guidance is related to their cultural background. Geletkanycz (1997) showed that executives' adherence to existing strategy is related to their cultural background in terms of individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. Rahim and Magner (1996) found that leaders in individualistic cultures tend to put more emphasis on coercive power. Mehra and Krishnan (2005) found that Indian culture of Svadharma-oriented (following one's own duties) is related to transformational leadership in that country.

Cultural norms are often enforced in the way people in a society relate to each other (Yukl, 2006). A leader in a high power distance culture is likely to act autocratically not simply because he/she has learned it through experience, but because any other type of behavior may be deemed ineffective by the boss or those outside the organization (Dorfman, 2004; Yukl, 2006; Javidan, et al. 2006; Javidan and Lynton, 2005). Dorfman (2004) and Chemers (1997) reviewed the international management

literature and assessed the generalibility of leadership theories, behaviors, and processes across national cultures. Both of these authors report mixed results. While some behaviors, such as “supportive leadership” or transformational leadership (Bass, 1997) appear to produce similar effects across cultures, other behaviors, such as “directive leadership,” seem to have culturally specific consequences (Dorfman, 2004). Similarly, participative leadership is viewed as a more effective leadership style in societies that have more egalitarian cultures (Carl, Gupta, & Javidan, 2004; Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2004).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Culture has been the focus of many studies across a variety of disciplines. In the past 30 years several well-known studies have addressed the question of how to characterize cultures. A substantial number of studies have focused specifically on ways to identify and classify the various *dimensions of culture*. A dimension of culture is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures.

Of all the research on *dimensions of culture*, perhaps the most referenced is the research of Hofstede (1980, 2001). Geert Hofstede did a survey of values in 50 countries and discovered that all countries have the same problems, but there are differing solutions from country to country. The common problems are social inequality, relationship between individual and group, concepts of masculinity and femininity, and ways of dealing with uncertainty. Hofstede created four dimensions of culture that show the various ways countries solve these problems. Based on an analysis of questionnaires obtained from more than 100,000 respondents, Hofstede identified four dimensions on which cultures differ: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. His individualism-collectivism dimension describes cultures from loosely structured to tightly integrated. The masculinity-femininity dimension describes how a culture's dominant values are assertive or nurturing. Power distance refers to the description of influence within a culture. And uncertainty avoidance reflects a culture's tolerance of ambiguity and acceptance of risk. Hofstede and Bond (1984) identified a fifth dimension, a Confucian dynamism labeled long-term orientation versus short-term orientation to life. Long-term orientation

cultures live for the future. Short-term orientation cultures believe in the fostering of virtues related to past and present especially respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations. Short-term orientation cultures live for today and think about tomorrow when it comes.

Hofstede's work has been the benchmark for much of the research on world cultures.

The GLOBE Study

In The specific area of *culture and leadership*, the studies by House et al. (2004) offer the strongest body of findings to date, published in the 800-page *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. These studies are called the GLOBE studies, named for the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research program. The GLOBE studies have generated a very large number of findings on the relationship between culture and leadership. The primary purpose of the project is to increase our understanding of cross-cultural interactions and the impact of culture on leadership effectiveness. As a part of their study of culture and leadership, GLOBE researchers developed their own classifications of cultural dimensions. Based on their own research and the works of others (e.g., Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; McClelland, 1961; Triandis, 1995), GLOBE researchers identified nine cultural dimensions: *uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and human orientation*.

We will use GLOBE nine culture dimensions variables to measure culture dimensions in Georgia.

Core Leadership Behaviors

The leadership behavior studies originated from three different lines of research: the Ohio State University studies, The University of Michigan studies, and the work of Blake and Mouton on the Managerial Grid.

Leadership research has tried to capture the overall way a manager exercises leadership by examining leadership styles. Successful leaders

Source: from Grid Solutions by Robert R. Blake and Anne Adams McCaule. (Formerly The Managerial Grid by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton.)

How leaders combine these orientations results in five major leadership styles: authority-compliance, country club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the-road management, and team management.

Research Methodology

The research consists of interviews and questionnaire-based data collection.

The Leadership Grid developed by Blake and Mouton was used as a framework to determine the dominant leadership style and the similar to GLOBE researchers' questionnaire was used to measure Georgian cultural dimensions. A total of 160 Georgian citizens representing different organizations in several major cities of Georgia were selected for an in depth analysis. Among them were doctors, nurses, lawyers, bank managers, teachers, musicians, salespersons, housewives and others. They were requested to fill out questionnaires to measure nine culture dimensions of Georgia. Categories of culture dimensions were: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. The Ohio State University Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was used for 90 Georgian managers and subordinates of the same n=160 sample to measure two different types of leader behavior: Production Orientation and Employee Orientation. The Ohio State study viewed these two behaviors as distinct and independent. Interviews were conducted with 30 people of 160. Interviews were semi-structured in the sense that though we had a list of questions to be asked, these were only possible and guiding questions. All these guiding questions were open ended. The interviews were thus essentially free-flowing in which the interviewees were actually encouraged to express themselves freely. Questions were about leadership behaviors culture dimensions that were low or high than seemed had to be.

Results

Data analyses were performed in three major steps. In the first step, scores on the culture dimensions of Georgia provide data on how people in

Georgia see the culture in which they live and work.

Georgia's culture dimensions high-score categories are In-Group Collectivism, Assertiveness Orientation, and Power Distance. The low-score categories are Gender Egalitarianism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Future Orientation. Human Orientation, Performance Orientation, and Institutional Collectivism are medium-score categories.

The following table provides information from the GLOBE project about how subjects from different cultures describe the dimensions of those cultures. The table also provides an overall mean for how these dimensions were viewed by people from all of the cultures. We entered Georgia's culture dimensions mean scores in the last column to get a better understanding of how Georgians perception of their own culture compares to that of others. We can also compare these scores to other specific cultures (e.g., Middle East or Latin America). How Georgian culture relates to other cultures is the first step to improved understanding between Georgian people and people from other cultures.

In comparison with other world cultural clusters, Georgia is more close to Eastern Europe cluster, but exception is low gender egalitarianism.

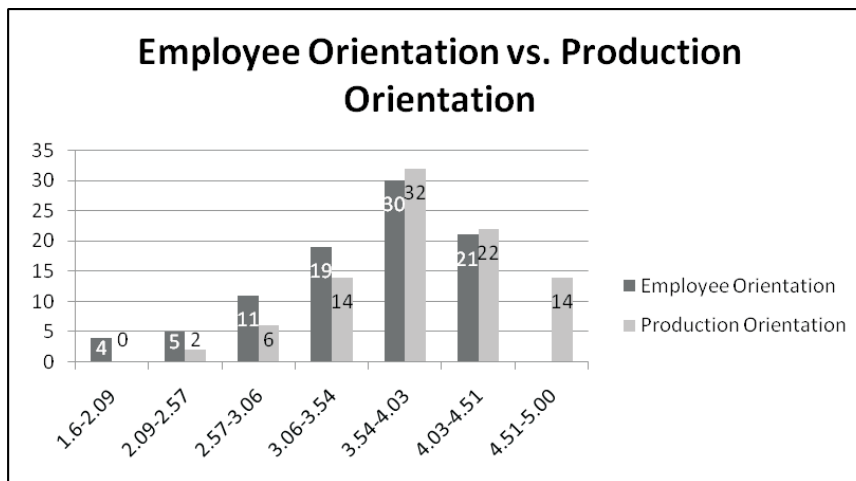
Table 1: Cultural Dimensions and Mean Scores for Selected Cultural Clusters

GLOBE Cultural Dimensions	Mean Scores of Selected Cultural Clusters						
	Anglo	Latin America	Middle East	Southern Asia	Latin Europe	Globe Overall	Georgia
Uncertainty avoidance	4.42	3.62	3.91	4.10	4.18	4.16	3.00
Power distance	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	5.17	5.03
Institutional collectivism	4.46	3.86	4.28	4.5	4.01	4.25	3.31
In-group collectivism	4.30	5.52	5.58	5.87	4.80	5.13	5.11
Gender egalitarianism	3.40	3.41	2.95	3.28	3.36	3.37	2.77
Assertiveness	4.14	4.15	4.14	3.86	3.99	4.14	5.04
Future orientation	4.08	3.54	3.58	3.98	3.68	3.85	3.08
Performance orientation	4.37	3.85	3.90	4.33	3.94	4.10	3.33
Humane orientation	4.20	4.03	4.36	4.71	3.71	4.09	3.25

In the second step, mean frequency distribution histograms (n=90)

were constructed for two main types of leader behavior: Production Orientation and Employee Orientation.

Figure 2: Employee Orientation Frequency vs. Production Orientation Frequency



Based on scoring interpretation we can conclude:

Employee Orientation Distribution:

- 9% - Very low;
- 11% - Low;
- 19% - Moderately low;
- 32% - Moderately high;
- 29% - High;
- 0% - Very high

Production Orientation Distribution:

- 2% - Very low;
- 7% - Low;
- 16% - Moderately low;
- 30% - Moderately high;
- 26% - High;
- 19% - Very high.

As we can see there is correlation ($r = 0.6$) between *Employee Orientation* and *Production Orientation* variables. This itself indicates that dominant leadership style from subordinates observation should evenly value both leadership behaviors and should be Middle-of-the-road Leadership. Though only the 9% of Production Orientation results fall into the low and the very low range, when the 20% of Employee Orientation results are in the same range; and the 19% of Production Orientation results fall in the very high range, when there is no results for Employee Orientation variable in the same range.

Employee Orientation sample distribution mean, median, and mode fall into moderately high segment (mean=3.5; median=3.6; and mode=3.9). Standard deviation is 0.70031. 99% confidence interval for

population mean will be (3.34; 3.72). Hence probability that Employee Orientation population mean will fall into Moderately low or Moderately high range is 0.99.

Production Orientation sample distribution mean, median, and mode also fall into moderately high segment (mean=3.85667, median=3.9, and mode=3.6). Standard deviation is 0.62334. 99% confidence interval for population mean respectively will be (3.68; 4,03). Probability that concern for Production Orientation population mean will fall in moderately high or even will reach high range is 0.99.

According to the scoring interpretation 99% confidence interval for both Production Orientation and Employee Orientation falls into Moderately High range. This is how people view their leadership. According to Blake and Mouton's Leadership Grid (Figure 2.14) we can conclude that dominating leadership style in Georgia from the subordinates' viewpoint tends to be Middle-of-the-Road Leadership though concern for results is a bit higher than concern for people.

In the third step, correlation between cultural variables and leadership behavior variables was analyzed. Comparatively strong positive correlation was found between *In-group Collectivism* and *Production Orientation* ($r = 0.5$); *Performance Orientation* and *Production Orientation* ($r = 0.44$); *Human Orientation* and *Product orientation* ($r = 0.44$). Negative correlation was found between *Institutional Collectivism* and *Product Orientation* ($r = -0.4$); *Assertiveness* and *Employee Orientation* ($r = -0.5$).

As we already know Georgia scored high in In-group Collectivism, Assertiveness, and Power distance. *In-group Collectivism* is positively weakly correlated with *Employee orientation* ($r = 3.33$) *Assertiveness* is negative correlated with *Production Orientation* as well as with *Employee Orientation*. Very weak positive correlation exists between *Power distance* and both *Employee and production Orientation*.

Conclusion

I based this research on Implicit Leadership Theory. A key element of implicit leadership theory is that leadership is in the eye of the beholder.

That is, how followers observe their leaders according with their implicit belief-set.

This is how according to this cultural dimensions distribution, questionnaire data and interviews, people in Georgia view their society: they are devoted, loyal and cohesive to their families or organizations. Aging parents generally live (should live) at home with their children. Parents take pride in the individual accomplishments of their children and children do the same though presently this tendency is moderately decreasing; they are dominant, confrontational and demanding in their relationships with others; power is uniquely shared throughout the society and followers are expected to obey their leaders without question; people are moderately sensitive to others; they are less achievement driven because they are not rewarded for excellent performance; they prefer broader societal interests rather than individual goals and accomplishments. Collective interests are preferable even if individual goals suffer; Women are unequally treated; Rules and laws are not stressed as a way to maintain order; and they don't emphasize strategic planning and are engulfed in solving current problems than in planning for the future.

Dominating leadership style in Georgia from the subordinates' viewpoint tends to be *Middle-of-the-Road Leadership* though *Production Orientation* variable is comparably higher than *Employee Orientation*. This style leadership tries to keep a balance between concerns for Production and Employees. First it seems as an ideal solution but it includes in itself a necessity of giving away a bit of each behavioral value. So that neither production nor employees needs are fully met..

Some cultural dimensions of Georgia are in correlation with two leadership behaviors (*Employee Orientation* and *Production Orientation*). Correlation does not necessarily mean causality. For example, if *Power Distance* is in positive correlation with *Employee Orientation* and in negative correlation with *Production Orientation*, that does not mean that high *Power Distance* is the cause of high *Production* and low *Employee Orientation*. But rather when PD variable goes up *Production Orientation* tends to increase and *Employee Orientation* tends to decrease.

Georgia's high-scored cultural dimensions are *In-group Collectivism*, *Assertiveness*, and *Power Distance*. According our data

analysis *Power Distance* is in a negative correlation with *Employee Orientation* and in a positive correlation with *Production Orientation*. But there is a negative correlation between *Assertiveness* and both Leadership behavior.

Generally, high *Power Distance* and *Assertiveness* societies' dominant leadership style tends to be Authority-compliance and our correlation analysis reflects the same. But employees evaluated their leaders' *Employee* and *Production Orientation* as Moderately High. Thus they view the dominant leadership style in Georgia as *Middle-of-the-road Leadership*. The causes of their leadership behavior evaluation could be different (high unemployment, socio-economic environment, historical background etc.,) but main factor is very high *In-group Collectivism*. This cultural dimension is more influential in workplaces than *Power Distance* and *Assertiveness*.

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Nino TKESHELASHVILI

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The Effects of Culture on the Leadership Style in Georgia

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