

Cross cultural differences between india and the united states of america



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Globalization has reshaped our modes of thinking and ways of behaving and fostering cultural change in societies. The nature of our workplace has changed. We moved away from the monochromatic make up of the offices to one that is now colored by team members from all over the world. Different cultures and cultural backgrounds between a highly diverse staff brings with it obstacles, challenges and difficulties.

Cross cultural differences manifest in general areas such as in behavior, etiquette, norms, values, expressions, group mechanics and non-verbal communication. Cross-cultural management is seen as a discipline of international management focusing on cultural encounters, which aims to discover tools to handle cultural differences seen as sources of conflict or miscommunication. Cross cultural solutions to international business demands are increasingly being viewed as a valid and necessary method in enhancing communication and interaction between companies, between companies and customers and between colleagues. Hofstede successfully narrowed the concept of culture down into simple and measurable components by adopting nation-state/nation culture as the basic unit of analysis.

This paper attempts to bring out the differences between cultures of India and The United States of America. The cultural differences were analyzed based on the Geert Hofstede's framework with the five parameters. The implications of these differences to the managers was analyzed and also its impact on business. 1. Introduction Globalization, the expansion of international trade, technological advances and the increase in the number of companies dealing on the international stage have brought about a

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dramatic change in the frequency, context and means by which people from different cultural backgrounds interact. Globalization has reshaped our modes of thinking and ways of behaving and fostering cultural change in societies.

The nature of our workplace has changed. We moved away from the monochromatic make up of the offices to one that is now colored by team members from all over the world. With this new multicultural make up come differences in cultures which in turn bring differences in areas such as communication styles, approach to time, managerial styles and a plethora of other cross cultural differences. It seems that globalization has given rise to a paradoxical movement of cultures.

On the one hand, emergent global cultures transcend national boundaries and cultures. On the other hand, the synchronizing power of internet and technology provides local companies indigenous cultural values with unprecedented global exposure. Different cultures and cultural backgrounds between a highly diverse staff brings with it obstacles, challenges and difficulties. Cross cultural differences manifest in general areas such as in behavior, etiquette, norms, values, expressions, group mechanics and non-verbal communication. Cross-cultural analysis could be a very perplexing field to understand with many different viewpoints, aims and concepts.

The origins of cross-cultural analysis in the 19th century world of colonialism was strongly grounded in the concept of cultural evolution, which claimed that all societies progress through an identical series of distinct evolutionary stages.

2. Culture The origin of the word culture comes from the Latin verb

colere = “ tend, guard, cultivate, till”. This concept is a human construct rather than a product of nature.

The use of the English word in the sense of “ cultivation through education” is first recorded in 1510. The use of the word to mean “ the intellectual side of civilization” is from 1805; that of “ collective customs and achievements of a people” is from 1867. The term Culture shock was first used in 1940. Culture is a mixture including knowledge, belief, art, law, morality and conventions shared by nearly all the members of a specific society and separating one group member from another; other skills and habits; also common attitudes and responsibilities learned subsequently, such as original lifestyles, emotions, etc.

It has played a crucial role in human evolution, allowing human beings to adapt the environment to their own purposes rather than depend solely on natural selection to achieve adaptive success. Every human society has its own particular culture, or socio-cultural system. 2. 1 Cross Cultural AnalysisThe first cross-cultural analyzes done in the West, were by anthropologists like Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis H Morgan in the 19th century. Anthropology and Social Anthropology have come a long way since the belief in a gradual climb from stages of lower savagery to civilization, epitomized by Victorian England.

Nowadays the concept of “ culture” is in part a reaction against such earlier Western concepts and anthropologists argue that culture is “ human nature,” and that all people have a capacity to classify experiences, encode classifications symbolically and communicate such abstractions to others.

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Typically anthropologists and social scientists tend to study people and human behavior among exotic tribes and cultures living in far off places rather than do field work among white-collared literate adults in modern cities. Advances in communication and technology and socio-political changes started transforming the modern workplace yet there were no guidelines based on research to help people interact with other people from other cultures. To address this gap arose the discipline of cross-cultural analysis or cross-cultural communication. The main theories of cross-cultural communication draw from the fields of anthropology, sociology, communication and psychology and are based on value differences among cultures.

Edward T. Hall, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, Shalom Schwartz and Clifford Geertz are some of the major contributors in this field. Cross-cultural communication or inter cultural communication looks at how people from different cultural backgrounds try to communicate. It also tries to produce some guidelines, which help people from different cultures to better communicate with each other. Culture has an interpretative function for the members of a group, which share that particular culture.

Although all members of a group or society might share their culture, expressions of culture-resultant behaviour are modified by the individuals' personality, upbringing and life-experience to a considerable degree. Cross-cultural analysis aims at harnessing this utilitarian function of culture as a tool for increasing human adaptation and improving communication. 2. 2

Cultural Distance This refers to measuring the extent to which cultures are

similar or different. This construct has been applied to most business administration disciplines.

Cultural difference has been used as a key variable in strategy, management and organizational behavior. 3 Different models of cross-cultural analysis

There are many models of cross-cultural analysis currently valid. The 'Iceberg' and the 'Onion' models are widely known. The popular 'Iceberg model' of culture developed by Selfridge and Sokolik, 1975 and W.

L. French and C. H. Bell in 1979, identifies a visible area consisting of behaviour or clothing or symbols and artifacts of some form and a level of values or an invisible level. Trying to define as complex a phenomenon as culture with just two layers proved quite a challenge and the 'Onion' model arose. Geert Hofstede proposed a set of five layers, each of which includes the lower level or is a result of the lower level.

According to this view, 'culture' is like an onion that can be peeled, layer-by-layer to reveal the content. Hofstede sees culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." Cross-cultural analysis often plots 'dimensions' such as orientation to time, space, communication, competitiveness, power etc., as complimentary pairs of attributes and different cultures are positioned in a continuum between these.

Trompenaars dimensions to distinguish between cultures Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) adopt a similar onion-like model of culture.

However, their model expands the core level of the very basic two-layered model, rather than the outer level. In their view, culture is made up of basic <https://assignbuster.com/cross-cultural-differences-between-india-and-the-united-states-of-america/>

assumptions at the core level. These 'basic assumptions' are somewhat similar to 'values' in the Hofstede model. 4. Hofstede dimensions to distinguish between cultures In 1980, Geert Hofstede published *Culture's Consequences* and established a fundamental shift in how culture would be viewed, thereby ushering in an explosion of empirical investigations into cultural variation.

Hofstede's impact was fourfold. He successfully narrowed the concept of culture down into simple and measurable components by adopting nation-state/nation culture as the basic unit of analysis. He established cultural values as a central force in shaping managerial behavior. Between 1967 and 1973, he carried out an international study (the "Hermes" study) in 72 countries with the help of IBM in order to measure cultural differences in business.

According to his study, the following parameters have been analyzed to measure the differences: Power Distance Index (PDI) that is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that 'all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others'. Individualism (IDV) on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are inte-grated into groups.

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On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word 'collectivism' in this sense has no political meaning: it refers to the group, not to the state. Again, the issue addressed by this dimension is an extremely fundamental one, regarding all societies in the world. Masculinity (MAS) versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found.

The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either

uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual.

Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions. Long-Term Orientation (LTO) versus short-term orientation: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars. It can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth.

Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension are found in the teachings of Confucius, the most influential Chinese philosopher who lived around 500 B. C.; however, the dimension also applies to countries without a Confucian heritage.